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Stars off the Record

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By Rutherford Rau

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Johnnie Ray

TWENTY-EIGHT year old Johnnie Ray was born in Dallas, Oregon, and is three-quarters Blackfoot Indian. As a child he injured his head during a blanket-tossing game which has resulted in the permanent loss of about fifty per cent. of his hearing. Off-stage he wears a deaf aid.

He began as a singer in small bars. Before that he worked as a bell-hop, a garage hand and a drug-store attendant. It was during this period that he wrote over a hundred songs. "The Little White Cloud that Cried"—one of his biggest hits—was among them. But, of course, it was his version of "Cry", made just four years ago, which started the Johnnie Ray cult in Britain, and he now shares with Frankie Laine the distinction of having the most loyal and also the most demonstrative fans among British teen-agers.

Just what does this slim, nervous, loose-limbed young man have to offer his followers? His charm is neither virile nor masculine. His voice is raucous and off-key. There is little romance about his singing and when he is working on the stage he shudders, stumbles and shakes like a man with the ague. Yet these are the tricks which had the girls, as usual, wild-eyed and shrieking on both his visits to Britain this year.

Johnnie's own explanation for his success in personal appearances is simple enough. "On stage I don't think of myself as a singer", he says. "I consider myself purely in terms of a performer and the first ingredient of my success is that I always try to be sincere. I believe in the songs I sing. I believe in what I'm doing."

His hysterical audiences are not confined to England. He has made two visits to Australia where girl teen-agers reacted in exactly the same manner as over here. Hollywood is also pleased with Mr. Ray. His performance in his first film, *There's No Business Like Show Business*, which came to Britain this year, was so satisfactory from the box office point of view that 20th Century-Fox paid singer Ray a $25,000 bonus. They have since presented him with a seven-year, $100,000 per picture, contract.

Johnnie Ray enjoys mixing with his fans—just as much as they enjoy greeting him. Here he is being welcomed at London Airport from New York.

FRANKIE LAINE

JOHNNIE RAY

" Hello Mom," says Johnnie as he arrives to stay with his parents in Dallas, Oregon.

When Johnnie comes marching home there's Dad to help carry the luggage and sister Elma to hold his hand. Lassie, the dog, walks alongside—content and proud.

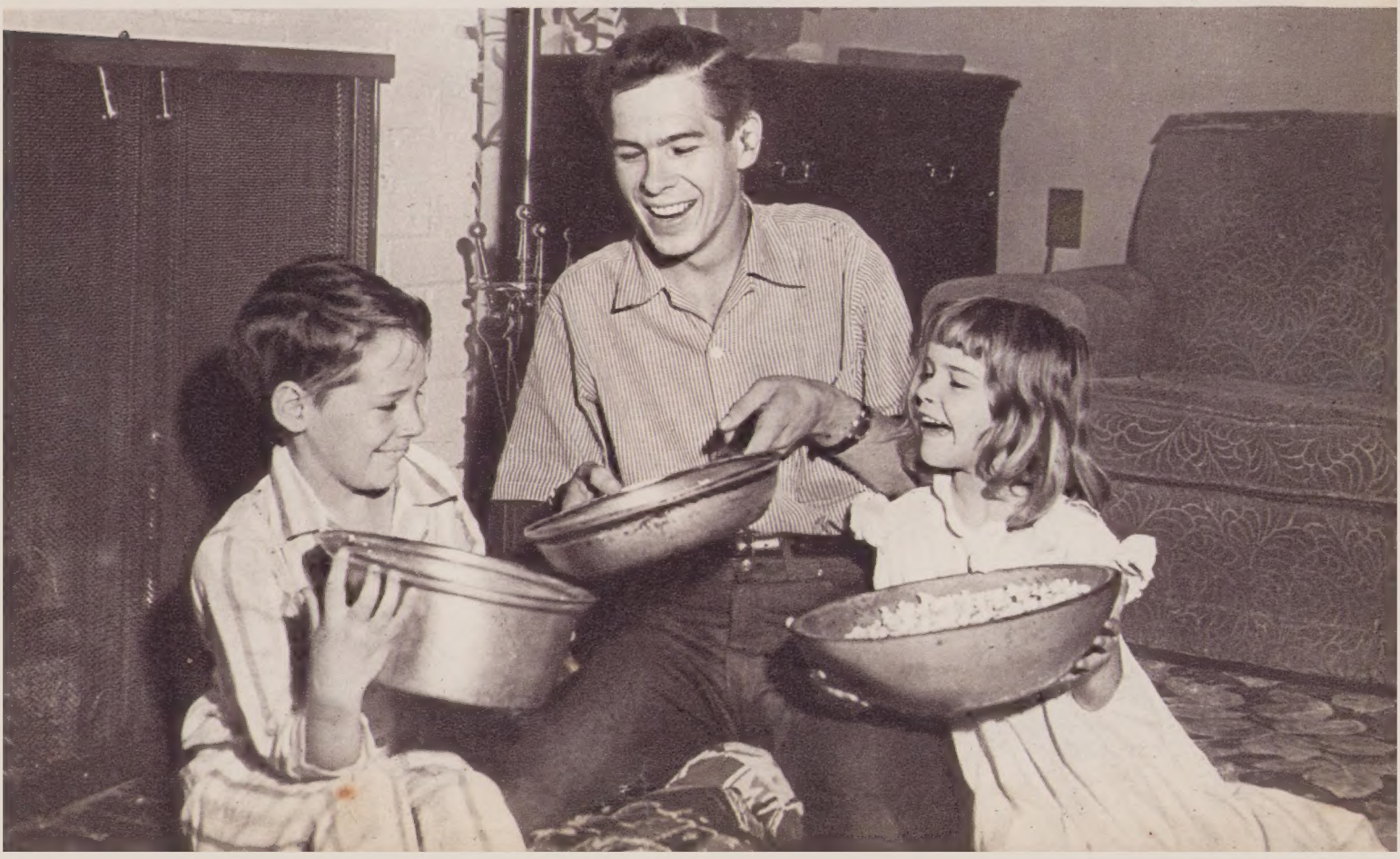
Johnnie, who is six feet tall, has been nicknamed " Prince of Wails ", " Mr. Emotion ", " The Cry Guy ", and other similar titles. All this goes back to his first recording of " Cry ". It was a great emotional hit. There were real tears in Johnnie's eyes when he sang the number on the stage of the vast London Palladium. But Johnnie is not merely a sad singer. Most of his other hits have been big bouncy numbers such as " Somebody Stole My Gal ", " Such a Night " and " Glad Rag Doll ".

He got his first chance before the microphone with an amateur show on a Portland (U.S.A.) radio station. One of his fellow performers was Jane Powell, then a teen-ager and now established as one of the great singing stars of the motion picture industry. The show was broadcast weekly but neither Jane nor Johnnie received any payment for their songs. When he was seventeen, Johnnie went to Hollywood seeking a job as a film actor.

When he failed to find one he started singing and piano playing in a night club. Here he met entertainers appearing in a nearby variety theatre

There's always a party at Johnnie's homecoming. It's such an important event that sister Elma goes upstairs and brings her small daughter down to join in the fun. Just as well she came, too. " Hi there, honey," is Johnnie's greeting, " like some popcorn ? "

(Below) If there's anything better than popcorn—it's more popcorn. Especially when it's Uncle Johnnie who is ladling it out to his young niece and nephew. " Much more fun than staying in bed—eh kids ? " asks Johnnie. " You bet "—they tell their singing uncle.



GUY MITCHELL

EDDIE FISHER with
DEBBIE REYNOLDS

and landed a job with one of the acts—as straight man to a comedian. The producer of the show also gave him a solo act as a singer and his pay was £14 a week. More singing engagements followed in small cafes around Los Angeles and it was during this period that Bernie Lang—a song plugger for a firm of publishers—began to take an interest in Johnnie's compositions.

At first Bernie only wanted to publish Johnnie's songs. He liked their fresh, original approach. But after hearing Johnnie sing them he gave up the publishing business to become Johnnie's manager—the position he still holds today. Bernie Lang, well known in American show business, at once set to work to earn Johnnie the recognition he deserved. He secured for him a contract with a big variety agency and in April 1951 he arranged for a representative from America's Columbia Records to hear Johnnie singing in the Flame Club, Detroit.

That one performance was sufficient. Three weeks later Johnnie flew to New York to wax his first recordings. "Cry" was on one side—and Johnnie's own number "The Little White Cloud that Cried", on the other. Sales topped 3,000,000 and Johnnie's discs have been consistent best sellers ever since.

Many of the songs Johnnie sings on the stage—such as "Walk and Talk With the Lord" and "If You Believe"—have a religious background. And, in his own home, Johnnie sings and plays for family hymn singing.

Off-stage Johnnie is a warm, friendly person. He enjoys mixing with his fans. He talks with a curious, corn-crake accent—the same quality which distinguishes his singing voice. He has one pet economy—he never wears cuff links while singing. The reason for this is that he has broken too many while working on the stage. So, instead, his cuffs are joined with paper clips.

Johnnie's marriage to Marilyn Morrison, daughter of the owner of Hollywood's famous Mocambo nighterie, is now dissolved. His name has been linked romantically with several girls, including the young British singer Sylvia Drew with whom he toured in variety, but none of these romances have resulted in any permanent engagement so far. "Don't worry," says Johnnie. "I don't intend staying a bachelor. I'll marry again when I meet the right girl."

(*Right*) "*Whew,*" *says Johnnie.* "*That was some show.*" *In the famous No. 1 dressing room of the London Palladium the singer lounges exhausted after his performance—his bow tie undone, the sweat dripping from his face. Some show indeed!*

(*Above*) *It doesn't worry Johnnie if they are advertising an Eddie Fisher record on the counter of a shop in his own home town.* "*I guess Eddie's a pretty good singer too,*" *he says.*

(*Right*) *When Johnnie posed for a Canadian photographer the man told him to look nonchalant. Then, he added,* "*Smile—just a little.*" *The finished product is one of Johnnie's favourites among the thousands of portraits which have been taken of him. The shrieking fans are forgotten, the blaring bands are stilled. There is no stage and no microphone . . . just a young man, quiet, relaxed and restful.*

RUBY MURRAY

Ruby Murray

TWENTY-YEAR-OLD Ruby Murray—red-haired and blue-eyed—gave British show business columnists their biggest romantic success story in years when she arrived at the London Palladium during August 1955 to star with Norman Wisdom in Val Parnell's big slap-up revue *Painting the Town*.

It had taken Ruby little over a year to achieve such distinction. When she was twelve, television variety producer Richard Afton—who has discovered more popular singers for the television screen than any other B.B.C. producer—gave her a brief appearance in one of his shows, and then forgot all about her. But in March 1954, producer Afton, who lives with his ex-Topper wife in a mews house not far from the Metropolitan Music Hall in Edgware Road, London, stood in the stalls of the famous variety theatre. The show was a touring revue—*Yankee Doodle Blarney*. It so happened that Joan Regan, another Afton discovery, was soon to leave the *Quite Contrary* series and producer Afton, himself an Irishman, took a chance and booked the unknown Ruby in her place.

One appearance on television was enough to set the phones ringing at the Lime Grove Studios. Agents, managements and recording companies were all anxious to contact the young Irish singer. One of the callers was band leader Ray Martin, in his capacity as recording manager for Columbia Records. Musician Martin had been looking at Ruby's performance on his home television set. He was so impressed with her that he immediately signed her up on behalf of Columbia.

Ruby's treatment of "Heartbeat", her first recording, was presented in a soft, intimate style that was different. Within a few days it had hit the jackpot in the disc market. More records were made and more hits by Ruby. Earlier this year, the blue-eyed Miss Murray—who had already begun to top variety bills in the provinces—found she had four records among the list of Britain's best sellers—something which no other singer, British or American, had ever previously achieved.

"Thank you for the roses," says Ruby Murray as she stands smiling in the London sunshine. Don't thank us, Ruby . . . thank you for posing for our cameraman.

RUBY MURRAY

By this time, Ruby, daughter of a clerk in the Civil Service of Northern Ireland, had come to live in Walworth Road, London, with her uncle who works on the railway. Her success was just as bewildering to him as to the neighbours back home in Belfast. They still looked on her as the gawky but clear-voiced schoolgirl who progressed to touring in small-time revues after singing in local charity concerts. There is nothing sophisticated in Miss Murray's handling of a number. She has no tricks and no gimmicks. She sings ballads with a straightforward approach which succeeds because of its very simplicity.

Her singing career is now being looked after by showman Bernard Delfont, brother of Lew and Leslie Grade. No attempt is being made to glamorise the girl from Belfast—apart from a new hair-do and a new tooth which has been fitted into the side of her mouth so as to fill a gap which previously gave her smile an uneven appearance.

Most of her fan mail comes from boys of her own age. Some send pictures and personal details of their appearance—their height, weight and colouring. Red-haired Miss Murray reports that she arranges these in rows on her dressing table. " I like to pretend they really are my boy friends," she says. But for the moment Miss Murray has no romantic attachments. She is saving up enough money to buy her parents a house and she has also promised her mother a fur coat.

Away from the microphone her personality and appearance are best summed up in the title of her best-selling record for the year—" Softly, Softly ". Outwardly, at any rate, the " Softly-Softly girl " remains unchanged by her success. In fact—although just before her London Palladium show opened she moved into a flat of her own—she still had to be persuaded against taking a bus to her opening night in the West End.

" This is the man who made it all possible," explains Ruby Murray as she introduces orchestra leader and recording executive Ray Martin. " Not at all," replies Ray modestly. But, if Mr. Martin hadn't spotted her on TV last year she might never have sold just under 1,500,000 discs in the past twelve months.

" I'm Just A Fool," sings diminutive Norman Wisdom in his dressing gown. Maybe, Norman, but that doesn't prevent Ruby from accepting an invitation to sit on your lap while visiting your dressing room at the London Palladium on the opening night of your first show together—Talk of the Town.

Frankie Laine

FRANKIE LAINE, once a boy singer in a Chicago church choir, first came to Britain in August 1952—booked for the London Palladium on the strength of his "Jezebel" and "Jealousy" recordings. But Frankie's singing career started long before that—way back in 1932 when he was nineteen when victory in a singing contest at Chicago's Merry Garden Ballroom resulted in an eight months' engagement. From then onwards he sang all over the U.S.A., but though many heard him during those fourteen years—no one took much notice.

Between singing engagements he worked as office boy, book-keeper, dancing teacher, shipping clerk, waiter, machine hand and car salesman. He even entered dance marathon contests, while on one occasion he was so hard-up that he slept for four nights on a New York park bench. "I sang pretty and I sang often," recalls Frankie, "but for years all I got out of it were plates of spaghetti."

In those days he called himself Lo Vecchio, his real name. His parents were Italian immigrants from Sicily and his father worked as a barber in Chicago. One day some one at a radio station complained that Lo Vecchio was too much of a mouthful to announce over the air and "Frank Laine" was suggested as an alternative. Later the "Frank" was changed to "Frankie" to avoid clashing with Frances Laine, a girl singer, and so the name was born.

The disc which rocketed Frankie to the top in America was "That's My Desire" waxed in 1946 and over 2,000,000 copies were sold. Today this singer's sales exceed 30,000,000 and he stands next to Bing Crosby as the world's biggest seller. Frankie owed his success to his decision to hit songs in a powerful belting way. Starting the big-voice trend, he put the "holler" touch to a ballad. Until then popular singers had been happy handling songs in the shy, caressing tone of crooners. Frankie Laine was the singer who first started to SING. "I'm not a crooner," he says. "I try to use my voice as a horn. Crooners sing softly. Well, I can do that too. But when the words call for it I give out—I make sure that people can hear my voice."

A rugged, manly type of performer, he stands six feet tall. He is married to actress Nan Grey and they live in Beverly Hills, California. Nan was already an established Hollywood star during the years Frankie was struggling for recognition. One of her most famous roles—Deanna Durbin's sister in *Three Smart Girls*.

Now Frankie is the big name with the public. In ten years he has become one of the wealthiest singers in show business, having his own television show in America. Last summer his programme earned the distinction of replacing Arthur Godfrey on a coast-to-coast relay over the CBS network daily. His most recent picture, seen by British filmgoers during the summer, is *Bring Your Smile Along*, but the. Frankie Laine voice has also been heard providing

"That's My Desire," sings Frankie. And his desire at the moment is to pick out the right notes on that guitar of his. Not that Frankie is likely to have any trouble over accompanying himself, he's an accomplished guitarist and there is nothing he enjoys more than strumming away to the sound of his favourite songs.

the theme music for three Hollywood film hits—*Blowing Wild*, *Man Without a Star* and *Strange Lady in Town*.

One of the biggest fan club organisations in the world centres on Frankie and he can boast of clubs in such unlikely places as Cairo, Malta and Iceland. In Britain alone, membership totals 25,000, while the business of keeping the singer in touch with his fans is carried out by twenty-one year old Beryl Lovett of Hayes, Kent. Herself a keen Frankie Laine follower, Beryl is employed by Mr. Laine as a full time secretary, to let his fan clubs know all about his latest activities.

The big tragedy in Frankie's life came last year with the death of Carl Fischer, the Cherokee Indian who became his pianist and friend. They wrote many hits together, including "We'll Be Together Again" which received the compliment of being recorded by another singer—Rosemary Clooney. The two men worked together for ten years and Carl was with Frankie on his British tours as well as

"Here, let me try this out on my own," says spectacled Jo Stafford while preparing a song for recording with Frankie in the recording studios of the Columbia disc group. Bearded Mitch Miller, shrewd recording manager who guides the destinies of many top line singers, looks on approvingly while Frankie too seems impressed.

" Hey fella," says Frankie. " Don't keep me too long with this photograph—I want that swim." All right, in you go Mr. Laine, we won't keep you. Especially as you have that lovely wife of yours, Nan, waiting for you.

Nan Gray had the role of one of Deanna Durbin's sisters in **Three Smart Girls.** *Here, with her two daughters Jan and Pam, she makes up a new trio—three smart girls and Frankie.*

arranging and directing the musical backgrounds for his recordings. It was a sad moment for the singer when he had to appear before the Queen in last year's Royal Variety Show without Carl.

When his friend died, Frankie was in the midst of an American tour. He opened in Chicago exactly ten years after their first meeting. " It was the first engagement without him," recalls Frankie. " Nan—feeling I would be needing her—flew in from California to be with me. After the first show—which I closed with that great song, ' I believe '—I broke down completely. I just couldn't go on. I cried on Nan's shoulder like a baby and swore I couldn't face an audience again. But Nan comforted me. She said Carl would have wanted me to carry on.

" It isn't easy to entertain an audience on the stage after losing my best friend—my accompanist, my arranger, my partner and my inspiration," Frankie went on, " but, a year later, I still feel Carl is right there with me whenever I sing. I know that he'll always be there too. As Nan says—he wants me to carry on."

" If ever a devil was born . . . ." sings Frankie while rehearsing " Jezebel " in the spotlight of the London Palladium.

(Top right) Two young admirers kiss their hero and from the look of things Frankie is enjoying the experience just as much as they are. " Don't you wish you could sing too ? " he asks.

(Left) One of the fans faints at the Battersea Festival Gardens during a Frankie Laine party. " Feeling better, honey ? " asks the singer. " You girls should take it easy, you know."

(Below) When Frankie's car comes gliding down Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard—all heads turn. And not always to look at Frankie either. It's usually his sleek, silver and black Cadillac which catches attention first. Frankie may be some singer but he has some car, too.

Alma Cogan

THREE years ago, deep-toned Alma Cogan—the singer with a laugh in her voice—was unknown. Yet 1955 has brought her a golden harvest—her name in lights for a summer show in Blackpool, her own series on Radio Luxembourg, a starring role in the B.B.C.'s *Take It From Here*, a Cinema-Scope film with Eric Winstone and his orchestra, and a best selling record with her jaunty version of " Dreamboat ".

Despite her success, twenty-two year old Alma continues to live quietly with her widowed mother and two sisters in Kensington. London born, she moved to Worthing with her family as a child and went to a Reading school. Alma owes her unusual Christian name to her mother's admiration for the silent motion picture star Alma Taylor. At thirteen, Alma's mother took her along to Ted Heath for an audition as a child singer and band leader Heath was impressed but told her to return when she was twenty.

However, Alma never went back. Instead, she owes her present position as a top selling vocalist to Walter Ridley, an executive of the H.M.V. company, who saw her when she was still an art student, and listened while she sang Gershwin's " The Man I Love ". Ridley advised her to take singing lessons and talked her out of singing with dance bands. " If you want to be a solo singer, they'll spoil your style," he told her. In the meantime Alma had to make a living, so, between lessons from Manlio di Beroli, she went to work singing songs for diners at the Cumberland Hotel.

At twenty, Walter Ridley asked her to record—" To Be Worthy of You ". B.B.C. disc jockey Jack Jackson gave that first attempt four airings. Each time he praised the singer over the air, although they had never met. Since then Alma has more than justified the confidence of connoisseur Jackson. In spite of this, she is the only girl singer who owes her stardom to radio as opposed to gramophone records, for when Joy Nichols left the cast of *Take It From Here*, the B.B.C.'s most popular radio series, someone had to fill the singing spots in the programme, and Alma was chosen.

" You're looking fine, Alma," says Eddie Fisher as he joins her for an after the show supper during his first visit to England. Just as well Debbie Reynolds isn't around. But, you see, this meeting was before Eddie knew Debbie . . .

Alma thinks she'll try a Spanish touch here. Like many other singers, Miss Cogan enjoys rehearsing to her own guitar accompaniment, especially when she can do so in the comfortable Kensington flat where she lives with her widowed mother and sister.

" How's this for a nice dress ? " enquires the provocative Alma. She designs all her own stage clothes and has them made for her by a Golders Green, London, N.W. dressmaker. One of the most clothes conscious girls in show business, Alma is also one of the biggest spenders. The dress she wore for her first appearance on commercial TV cost £300.

When *Take It From Here* finished, she set out on a tour of the halls. But here she developed throat trouble and her doctors ordered complete vocal rest—no talking, no singing. Quietly, Alma faded from show business. It looked as though this might be the end. . . . Six months later, however, she was back—the doctors had restored her voice. She was singing better than ever.

Lew and Leslie Grade, who run Europe's biggest variety agency, now handle her stage appearances, for Alma is one of those rare girls with a stage personality as distinct from a mere microphone voice. This she picked up as a £9 a week chorus girl in the London version of the U.S. show, *High Button Shoes*, at the London Hippodrome when she was only sixteen.

At that time one of her fellow high-kickers in the show became a great friend of hers. They used to drink cups of coffee together between performances. " I'm going to be a popular singer one day," said Alma. " I'm going to be a great actress," replied her friend. And the friend's name ? Audrey Hepburn.

Alma has the trick of presenting a merry bounce with a song and she puts a happy swing into the words. No tears or sadness for her. " I'm a happy singer," she says. " And I like to sound happy, too."

Yet behind those happy songs there is a great sorrow in Alma's life. Her father, who used to meet her nightly after her evening appearances at London's Cumberland Hotel, died before she became a star and never knew the brilliant success she was to achieve.

" To Be Worthy Of You," reads the label of Alma's first record. When she made it she dedicated the thought to H.M.V. recording manager Walter Ridley who gave her that first chance. Alma has indeed proved worthy of Mr. Ridley's confidence.

Nat 'King' Cole

WHEN Nat Cole formed his trio in 1937 one of the musicians in the group popped a paper crown on Nat's head and jokingly recited the age-old nursery rhyme about Old King Cole being a merry old soul. Ever since, this smooth-voiced jazz singer has been Nat 'King' Cole to one and all.

Born in Montgomery, Alabama, thirty-six years ago, young Cole moved to Chicago in 1923 when his father took up a position there as a Baptist pastor and his mother directed the church choir. It was his mother who made sure of Nat becoming a pianist. Before he could walk she was sitting beside him at the keyboard of their upright piano and by the time he was four he could play, " Yes, We Have No Bananas ", the hit tune of the time.

Nat's first job in the musical world was as a pianist with a small group of jazz musicians led by his brother Eddie, an accomplished bass player. From here, Nat went into a touring revue which became stranded in California and the boy from Alabama then went to work as a night club pianist in small Hollywood clubs. During these engagements he formed a quartet consisting of piano, guitar, bass and drums and managed to organise an audition with a restaurant proprietor. This was the origin of the famous Nat 'King' Cole trio for, somehow or other, the musician engaged as a drummer failed to arrive at the restaurant. Nat and the other two musicians went to work and the manager of the restaurant was so pleased with what he heard he gave them a long booking.

Between their instrumental numbers, the Cole trio used to sing in unison but Nat never considered himself good enough as a singer to strike out on his own. However, one night, when the trio was playing Swannee Inn, Los Angeles, one of the customers kept shouting out that he wanted to hear " Sweet Lorraine ". Nat tried to explain to him that this wasn't a song which the group could sing together and that as none of them could sing a solo number he was unable to oblige with this particular request. The customer complained to the manager and Nat realised that unless he sang the number he would be out of work. Then, much to his surprise, he found himself greeted with a big round of applause when he finished the song. From then on, Nat became the featured singer with his own trio.

In 1943, the group were signed up by the Capitol Recording Company and made their first disc—a number which Nat himself had written, " Straighten Up

and Fly Right." The song became a big hit in America but unfortunately for Nat he had disposed of the rights to a music publisher just twelve months previously—for £18. Nat and the trio were soon steady sellers with American jazz fans, although it wasn't until the end of 1948 that their records reached England under the Decca label. At first they enjoyed a restricted scale among jazz enthusiasts, but when Nat began to branch out with material completely new for him, recording with large string backgrounds, his efforts were rewarded with large sales amongst the British public.

His first record to click in Britain on a big scale was " Nature Boy ". He followed this up with many outstanding titles including " Mona Lisa ", " Unforgettable ", " Mother Nature and Father Time " and " Darling, Je Vous Aime Beaucoup ". His most recent successes—" Smile ", " Hajji Baba ", " The Sand and the Sea " and " My One Sing ". In the early autumn of 1955, Decca issued his version of " Love Is A Many-Splendoured Thing " backed by " Autumn Leaves ", both of which turned out well in the Cole tradition.

But it was " Nature Boy ", the song which launched him in England, which also established Nat as a top best seller in his own country, put £20,000 into his bank account and enabled him to start his own music publishing company. Ironically, the only person who didn't do so well with the number was the man who wrote it—a strange, long-haired, bearded hermit who lived alone in Hollywood—Eden Ahbez. Immediately the record was released in America, the owner of a music store in Brooklyn claimed that the song was taken from a Yiddish ballad called " Be Calm My Heart ". Months of law suits followed and finally the owner of the music shop was able to prove that Ahbez had once visited his shop and would have been in a position to see a copy of the original tune " Be Calm My Heart ". As a result, the Court made a settlement in which the Brooklyn man received a large share of the royalties.

" Man Oh Man ! " smiles Nat ' King ' Cole. " Did you ever see such telegrams ? " Nat holds up a bunch of congratulatory wires in his London Palladium dressing room.

NAT ' KING ' COLE

How did Nat ' King ' Cole come to hear of the song in the first place ?

" We were playing in the Orpheum Theatre in Los Angeles when I first met Ahbez," he recalls. " He was a strange looking guy and every day I arrived at the theatre there he was waiting for me at the stage door. Finally, in self-defence, I took him into the dressing room and listened to his song. It was the luckiest break in my whole life."

During the twelve years that he has been associated with the Capitol recording firm, Nat ' King ' Cole has sold more records for them than any other of their disc stars. The total now stands at over 20,000,000.

In 1948 he married singer Marie Ellington and their Harlem wedding was one of the most lavish in show business history. He calls his wife " Skeez " and his nicknames for his two daughters are " Sweetie " and " Cookie ".

Back in his Los Angeles home, the wall of one room is filled entirely with plaques, medals and gold records awarded to him during the twelve years he has been a recording star.

In 1950 he made his first visit to England with his trio and appeared at the London Palladium. The occasion was a very pleasing one for the jazz fans and professional musicians but the ordinary, run-of-the-mill supporters of variety were leaving their seats before the end of Cole's act.

In 1954, however, it was an entirely different story. The trio days were over and here was Nat appearing in his own right as a solo singer. He sang with an easy Southern charm that was both relaxed and polished, yet somehow dignified. After visiting London, he went on to sing in Paris, Copenhagen, Brussels and Stockholm.

Nat ' King ' Cole holds a unique place in the recording industry. In all the years that he has been making records he has had the distinction of being recognised as the singer who has never yet made a bad recording.

" Smile," sings Nat ' King ' Cole, whereupon the Tanner Sisters take Nat's sensible advice and join him in a happy session over the B.B.C. radio network. " A wonderful singer," said the girls afterwards. " It was a great experience." Said Nat, " You British can still teach us a thing or two when it comes to singing."

Dickie Valentine

DICKIE VALENTINE, now in his second year as a top-of-the-bill star singer, learned his stage technique during his five years with the Ted Heath orchestra. Since leaving Ted Heath, twenty-six year old Dickie has topped the bill at the London Palladium, starred in a summer show at Blackpool, flown to New York to appear on Ed. Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* show on American television and appeared before the Queen in last year's Royal Variety Show. His best selling discs for 1955 were " The Finger of Suspicion " and " I Wonder ". Both sold over 300,000 copies.

Dickie's London Palladium debut, which opened the theatre's 1955 variety season, caused many smiles backstage. For just ten years previously Dickie had worked there—as a thirty-five shilling a week call boy. And he was always singing. He used to sing in the corridors and the dressing rooms—so loud and so often that the cast of one show signed a round-robin letter asking him to keep quiet.

One day, the head attendant sent for fifteen year old Dickie, who replied with a cheeky message—" Tell him I'm busy ". Not surprisingly, he was sacked on the spot. Undaunted, young Dickie at once got himself a better job —at fifty shillings a week as a call boy in *The Kid from Stratford*, a musical comedy starring Arthur Askey at His Majesty's Theatre.

In the corridors of the new theatre, Dickie sang just as he'd sung at the Palladium. But this time he was heard by someone who appreciated the unusual quality of his deep, resonant baritone; it was Canadian singer Bill O'Connor who stopped him one morning and suggested he should have lessons. When Dickie explained he couldn't afford them, Mr. O'Connor said he would pay the fees.

" It was the start of everything," says Dickie. " Till then everyone told me I had a voice like a foghorn. I had eighteen months' tuition—breathing exercises, scales, the lot. Without Bill's encouragement and

It could be Johnnie Ray—it could be Billy Daniels. But whoever he is impersonating, the fans know that beneath the clenched fists and the tight lips it's still their very own Valentine.

Noisy or quiet? It doesn't matter. However Dickie sings he can't do wrong by those fans. He can hold them quiet and respectful with smooth ballads or he can whip them to a frenzy with his eyes shut, head back and bent knees . . . clutching hands reach towards him with outstretched fingers. Girls laugh and scream. It's all good fun—and not only for the girls. Young Mr. Valentine enjoys himself too

backing I would never have carried on. I even got a broadcast in the B.B.C.'s *In Town Tonight*—as Richard Bryce, my real name."

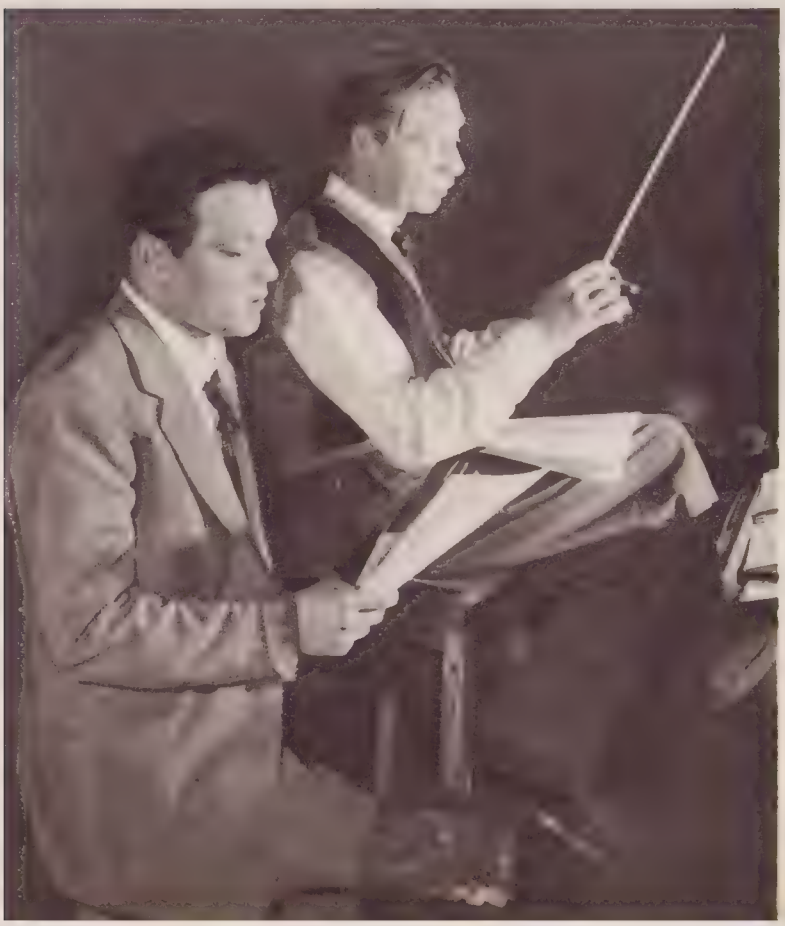
Asthma kept him out of the Forces and he managed to get a job singing at two night clubs at the same time—the Panama Club at 10.30 p.m. and the Blue Lagoon at 1.30 a.m. "I haven't been in a night club since," says Dickie.

Dickie keeps a date with his Radio Luxembourg audience as he gets to work recording his commercial radio series in the Mayfair studios of the Continental station.

It was Ted Heath who turned Richard Bryce into Dickie Valentine. He had just joined the orchestra as resident vocalist and bandleader Heath decided to alter his name on Valentine's day—partly because Dickie had a heart-shaped face and partly because Heath thought the new name would sound better in terms of box office appeal. Then came Dickie's first record—backed by the Heath orchestra—a sentimental ballad written by bandleader Ted and his wife Moira. The title was " That Lovely Week-End ". It told the story of a soldier's thoughts after spending forty-eight hours' leave with his wife. But although the number became a big war-time hit, the particular version recorded by Dickie Valentine did little to help it on its way. " I made a hash of it," admits Dickie. " The recording company never even issued the record."

Things changed with " All the Time and Everywhere ". This time Dickie made no mistakes and the record sold 100,000 copies. It was the first step towards winning him one of the biggest fan followings of any British singer among the country's teen-agers.

In October 1954 he married ex ice-skater Elizabeth Flynn. Some of his advisers thought his teen-age following would slump. Instead, his fan club membership jumped from 800 to 5,000. Every year they send him more Valentines than Christmas cards.

" Take it quietly here," says bandleader Cyril Stapleton as he runs through the ballad for Dickie to broadcast to his fans. And what message does singer Valentine send them ? Why, " I Know You're Mine "—of course.

His business affairs are now looked after by his father, who has given up his job in road transport to become Dickie's manager. Two girl secretaries have the full-time job of looking after his fan club. " I like to keep in touch with my fans," says Dickie. " I take notice of what they tell me. I like to sing the songs they want me to sing and I am grateful for their advice." Every year he organises a party for his fans. The size of this has grown annually so that for his last get-together Dickie hired the huge Hammersmith Palais dance hall.

Dickie's pet likes—steaks, spaghetti, Frank Sinatra and going to the cinema. His favourite record is Richard Rogers' " Victory at Sea ". His dislikes—dirty ashtrays, women with too much make-up and smoked salmon.

He calls his wife Liz and they first met in July 1951 when both were appearing at Morecambe, Lancashire. They chose their wedding ring at the same shop in Camden Town, London, patronised by Dickie's parents just twenty-six years previously.

(Left) " Let's see that impersonation again that you do on the stage," says Johnnie Ray in Dickie's dressing room at the London Palladium. " What now ? " replies Dickie. " You'll have to wait till the second performance." Johnnie is a great admirer of the way Dickie impersonates him. The first time he saw his take-off he sent him a telegram saying, " You're the greatest ".

(Below) It's not all hard work being a top of the bill singer. Sometimes you get around to holding hands with pretty girls. Dickie is evidently enjoying this greeting from Hollywood's Mary Castle on winning the New Musical Express poll. And if you think Mary looks like Rita Hayworth, you're quite right. She has doubled for her in several films.

" Here's a nice letter," says Mrs. Bryce as she helps her son sort out his fan mail. " Better send her one of your special photographs." Since Mum always knows best, that's just what Dickie did.

" Oh Dickie," say the girls, " you're so handsome." For although his wedding to former ice-skater " Liz " Flynn made Liz the most envied girl in Britain, when it comes to cutting the three-tier cake it's not the lovely bride who attracts the fans. Dickie's the boy they've come to see, he's the one who gets those admiring glances.

Joan Regan

DAUGHTER of an Irish builder, twenty-five year old Joan Regan was born in Sidcup, Kent. When she was seventeen she married Dick Howell, a lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force and went to America to live with him in the shadow of the film studios at Burbank, California. Husband Dick was a professional photographer in civilian life and Joan used to help him in his business. "But somehow things didn't work out," says the girl from Sidcup, "so I came back to England with our two children, Danny now eight and Rusty who is six, and went to live with my parents."

This was in 1952 and Joan took a spare time job in the office of a wholesale fruit merchant in Covent Garden. One of her duties was to call on the local bank manager to whom she told the story of how she had won two amateur talent contests as a teenager. "Still, what's the use?" said Joan. "There's nothing I can do about it now. A married woman with two children doesn't stand much chance with a singing career." But there was something about Joan which impressed the bank manager. One of his clients was variety agent Keith Devon of the Bernard Delfont office and he agreed to give office worker Joan an audition.

Her pleasant, easy-going way with a song soon had agent Devon sitting up and taking notice. Singing lessons followed and in June 1953 the name of Joan Regan was on the label of "Ricochet"—a Decca best seller. The following November Joan Regan faced her first national audience in the Lime Grove studios of the B.B.C. as resident singer, backed by Ray Martin's orchestra, in television's *Quite Contrary* series.

Television and disc sales—in two years she sold more than 1,000,000 pressings—put Joan among the head-liners long before she had ever appeared on any stage. Today she has a £10,000 a year income and a fan club of nine thousand members. She has bought a five-bedroomed house at Sidcup for £3,000 and spent another £2,000 on improvements.

"Just Say You Love Me," sings lovely Joan Regan as she stands poised, assured and elegant before the stage microphone. No need for Joan to wait for our reply. With those looks and that voice . . . who wouldn't?

JOAN REGAN

In April 1955 she went to America to appear on television and enjoyed a big success in Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* series.

During the summer Joan has been headlining in a summer show at Blackpool. Some of her best recordings are "If I Give My Heart to You", "Just Say You Love Me" and "Till I Waltz again With You", the last-named also became a best-seller in America.

One handicap the blonde and beautiful Joan has had to overcome —the fact that she sounds very much like Vera Lynn. It's just one of those chances in a million that in sound and technique they are almost identical. But hard work and perseverance seem to have won through at last, for Joan has now developed a style which, in its phrasing and delivery, has established her as a top singer on her own account.

—That bank manager's intuition has been proved right.

"Don't overdo the eyebrows," says Vera Lynn while giving a few hints in stage make-up to Joan Regan. "But you must accentuate them more for stage lighting." "I see just what you mean," replies the attentive Joan and off she goes to her own dressing room to try out Vera's advice. A few moments with an eyebrow pencil and there she is ready to receive us at her dressing table and show us the result. "Just a moment," says Joan, "I'd like my boys in the picture too. And now what do you think of my stage make-up?" Fine, Miss Regan, just fine.

Frankie Vaughan

FRANKIE VAUGHAN would have been a commercial artist—if he could have found a job. For Frankie—born Frank Abelson—borrowed £5 from his father in Liverpool and came to London in 1950 seeking work after studying at Leeds Art School. It was only when he failed that he turned to singing.

The son of an upholsterer, Frankie first entertained as a singer while in the Army. On demobilisation, however, he had no intention of embarking on a theatrical career so he enrolled as a student at the Leeds College of Arts. Every year the students used to present a revue at the Empire Theatre and Frankie, remembering his days as a singer in the Army, volunteered to help out the entertainment with a song. His appearance on the stage made a great impression on the manager of the theatre, who suggested he should get in touch with Billy Marsh of the Bernard Delfont Agency which handles such top line artists as Norman Wisdom, Joan Regan and Ruby Murray. Frankie politely thanked him for the suggestion but made it quite clear he intended to remain a commercial artist.

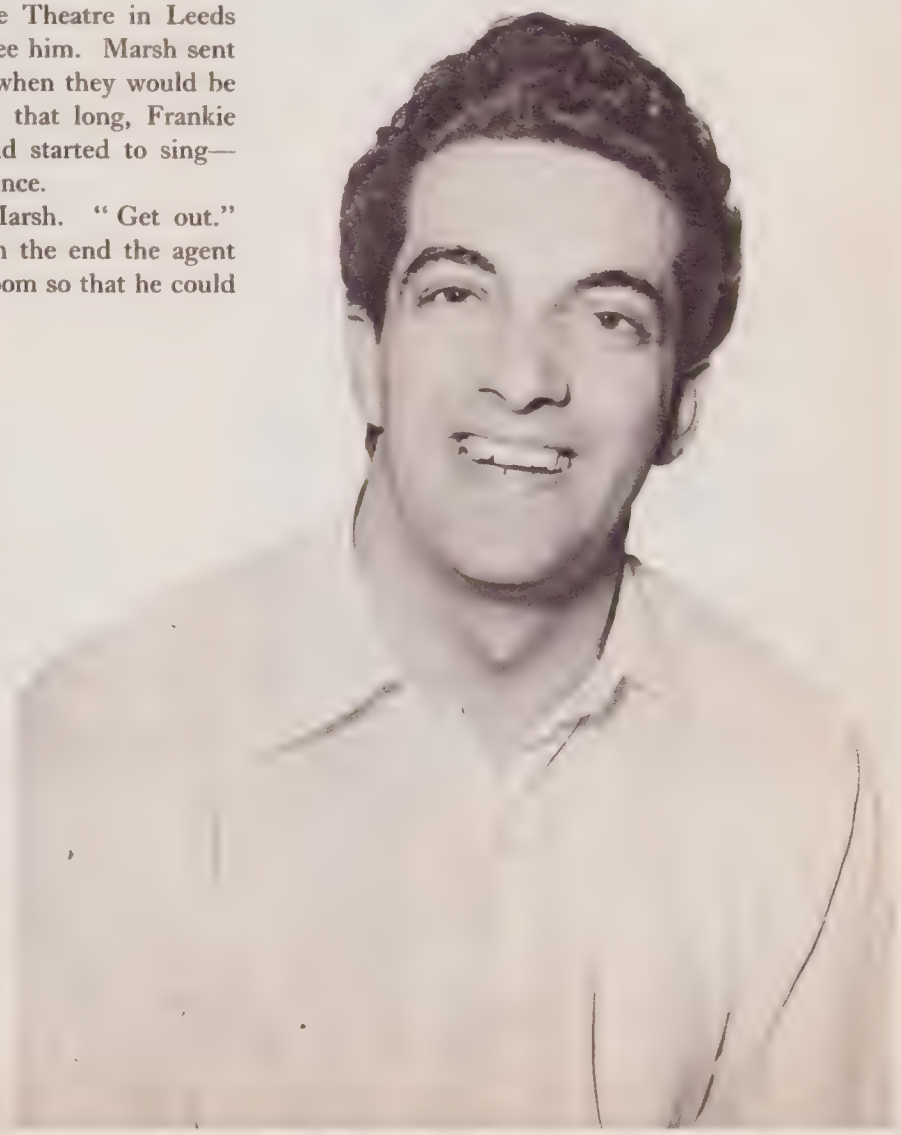
Leaving the Arts school, Frankie obtained a commission to design a stand at an exhibition which was being held at Earls Court, London. The fee was thirty guineas, which seemed a lot of money at the time, but after he had come to London and carried out the job Frankie found it quite impossible to interest anyone else in his drawings.

It was then that he remembered the Bernard Delfont office and agent Billy Marsh – the man who gave Norman Wisdom a break when he had only thirty shillings in his pocket. Frankie sent in his letter of introduction from the manager of the Empire Theatre in Leeds and waited patiently for agent Marsh to see him. Marsh sent him a message to come back in a month when they would be holding some auditions. Unable to wait that long, Frankie walked straight into the agent's office and started to sing—right in the middle of a business conference.

"Who let you in?" roared Billy Marsh. "Get out." But Frankie went right on singing and in the end the agent told him to get a pianist and a rehearsal room so that he could give him a proper audition. Frankie went out, borrowed an unemployed pianist from the Musicians' Union and paid half-a-crown for a basement room with a piano in Soho.

He then spoke to Billy Marsh again over the phone and he agreed to come round and listen to Frankie's version of "Powder Your Face with Sunshine". Marsh at once made up his mind to give the unknown commercial artist a chance —as a singer. Says Frankie, "I had never earned a shilling as a singer. I knew practically nothing about music and I still can't play the piano or read more than a few notes."

The following Monday night he appeared at Kingston Empire. His



name wasn't on the bill or in any of the programmes and although Frankie, knowing nothing about stage technique, waded into his songs like a fighter whose only hope is a knockout, the audience liked him. The next evening Frankie found the running order had been changed and he appeared as the last performer in the first half of the show, the second best position in any variety bill.

After a year of touring, during which his salary went up to £150 a week, Frankie and his wife Stella decided to return to London to try and secure a break over the B.B.C. For a year Frankie tried to get a broadcast without success and then H.M.V. came along and asked him to record " My Sweetie Went Away ". The disc sold 8,000 copies which wasn't very many but it was enough to have people sitting up and taking notice of the newcomer.

At first, listeners thought he was an American and kept ringing up the B.B.C. to ask " When is Frankie Vaughan coming to Britain ? " No one would believe that he was a home product—born in Liverpool. A top-of-the-bill variety tour followed and Frankie is now firmly established among British bobby-soxers. In variety, he can earn up to £600 a week.

Tall—he stands 5 feet 11 inches—he has black curly hair and a Victor Mature smile. He lives with his wife and two year old son in a flat in St. John's Wood, London, where he sometimes invites his fans round to tea. His fan club now totals more than 14,000 members and during the summer of 1955 he made show-business history by becoming the first popular singer to appear on skates in an ice show when he was given a starring role in *Wild Fire* at London's Empress Hall.

" Being a bobby-soxers' hero is an arduous business," admits Frankie. " Most days I run anything up to five miles. Often I train with professional football teams and I am also a keen amateur boxer."

Frankie is recognised as having one of the most expressive voices among his contemporaries and during his stage appearance he always gives the impression of enjoying himself tremendously. He has been described as the " Yip and Growl " singer. He plays to the girls—winks at them, smiles at them and flirts outrageously with them. But it's all in good fun. It's just Frankie's way of having a good time—and keeping the fans happy too.

(Top left) " There's no business like show business," laugh Mr. and Mrs. Frankie Vaughan as they relax in the comfort of their St. John's Wood, London, N.W. flat. There certainly isn't Frankie—not when it can bring you in £600 a week.

(Bottom, left) " Just a moment while I get the hair right," says Frankie as he puts the finishing touches to a pencil sketch of his wife.

Frank Sinatra

FRANK SINATRA'S position amongst all the popular singers in the world of show business is enviable and unique. Even his fellow artists are unanimous in their admiration for him. In fact for years, the Sinatra styling and the Sinatra way with a song have been accepted as the goal for every newcomer in the recording business. And 1955, of course, has been a golden year for stylist Sinatra. It has brought him more world hits than any of his rivals and established a complete come-back for this one-time Hoboken newspaper man who quit journalism after seeing a Bing Crosby film at the local cinema.

Three years ago the Sinatra record of " Good Night Irene " sold only a mere 150,000 copies in the United States. But now in 1955, his " Young at Heart " has topped the 1,000,000, while his dreamy, haunting " Learnin' the Blues " jumped into the British best selling list immediately it arrived here. Combined British and American sales now top another 1,000,000. Again, two years ago, there were empty seats when he appeared at Sunday concerts in England. But, if he came now, the Sinatra magic would produce " House Full " boards everywhere.

Then why the change in Sinatra's fortunes ?

Well, for a start, the fact is that this year's crop of his recordings show he has never been in better voice—and the public are aware of it. In the expensive record album market, for example, he is the only popular singer to have secured big sales with such albums as " Songs for Young Lovers " and " Swing Easy ". But, undoubtedly, the major reason for his come-back is the chance which Hollywood gave him in the role of Private Maggio in *From Here to Eternity*. It was an opportunity which Sinatra took with both hands. His performance won him a coveted Academy Award and when the fans saw him on the screen they found a strange, new, fierce yet sensitive Sinatra—a natural actor with a superb flair for the projection of his personality.

But this was no flash in the pan success. Since then, there have been other films too -like *Young at Heart*, *Not As A Stranger*, *The Tender Trap* and *Guys and Dolls*. The last is a film version of the Broadway and London musical hit in which he has the role of the dice-throwing Nathan Detroit.

Today, at thirty-nine, Sinatra has hit the road back with a vengeance. Next to Bing Crosby he has become the most versatile entertainer in show business. Yet, in " Who's Who " he still lists his occupation as " Baritone ". What kind of a man is he ?

Well, you'd find him a flamboyant character—a big spender who can be as sullen one day as he is carefree the next. His eyes are bright and very blue—he is very thin and wears his hair short. Sinatra likes rings and cuff links to match and he has a lot of clothes —over a hundred suits, fifty pairs of shoes and twenty hats.

Like many other performers he is temperamental. When he was in London with his second wife, Ava Gardner, he once spent forty minutes by her side in a club and said nothing beyond " What's the time ? " and " See you later." Then off he went for a B.B.C. engagement.

" Senor, you have a wonderful way with a story," says Frank Sinatra while filming " The Kissing Bandit " for M-G-M.
" And you, senor Sinatra, have a wonderful way too—with a song," replies his Spanish guest.

He was born on December 12th, 1915, in Hoboken, New Jersey. His father, a small time boxer, taught him how to use his fists and he is sometimes careless enough to use them in public on people who have upset him.

Following that early job with a local newspaper, he persuaded his mother to buy a portable public address system which he hired out at local dances with himself as featured singer. Then, after singing " Night And Day " on an amateur talent show over a major American network, Sinatra found himself with a thirty-nine week contract for a variety tour.

Afterwards came many broadcasts on local radio programmes in and around New York—but most of it was unpaid. Offered £8 a week as a singing waiter in a road house called the " Rustic Cabin ", near his Hoboken home, Sinatra accepted at once. It turned out a lucky decision for it was here that band leader Harry James heard the unknown vocalist and took him on at £30 a week. Six months later Tommy Dorsey offered him double and the young Sinatra joined the famous Dorsey band. It was during this period that Sinatra developed the style which was eventually to rocket him overnight into the top bracket of popular song men.

He took much longer over his songs, he sang them slow. The words were crystal clear but he drooled over the notes and above all else he developed the great Sinatra phrasing. Sinatra in fact was the first popular singer to obtain dramatic effect at the microphone with breath control—he developed the trick of inhaling in the middle of a note without breaking it. He sang and inhaled at the same time —an unusual gimmick which enabled him to loop one phrase to another so that it sounded as though he had never paused for breath.

After two years, the American teenagers began to take an interest in Tommy Dorsey's scrawny vocalist, who, holding the microphone as he sang, offered a sound in which there was a strange, new, exciting magic. At first, the girls reacted with a few mild whinnies of delight. The rest of the band

thought it was a joke and when the shrieks and moans came they made fun of it all by moaning back.

Sinatra asked band leader Dorsey to release him so that he could embark on a career as a solo singer and he opened at the Paramount Theatre, New York, on New Year's Eve 1942. And it was here —just thirteen years ago—that the great historic swoon scenes first took place—when Sinatra became the first male vocalist to send bobby-sox audiences into near-hysteria.

It all started with a hungry girl.

A teenage girl who had stood all night outside the Paramount Theatre collapsed in her seat after sitting through seven shows without food. It was the first swoon.

The American press headlined the event as a news item and it was cabled all over the world. Soon, all the girls were at it so that it became as much entertainment to see the teenagers swooning as to watch Sinatra on the stage. Sinatra was nicknamed "The Voice", "The Bony Baritone" and "The Sultan of Swoon". Comedians made fun of him, cartoonists ridiculed him and impressionists copied him. But, for Sinatra, all this belongs to the past. The boy from Hoboken has matured—he leaves the swooning bobby-soxers to those who have followed.

The new Sinatra has five motion pictures scheduled over the next year; America's N.B.C. network have offered him a five year television contract and shrewd Val Parnell, London Palladium boss, is already at work to get him to England next summer. One film did all this for Sinatra—*From Here To Eternity*. He was so sure he could make a success of the Maggio role that he asked to appear in the production for a mere £300 a week. His fee for the whole film was less than £3,000. Yet this year his film earnings alone will gross more than £300,000.

All this, whichever way you look at it, is a pretty good pay-off for that salary sacrifice, the dividends from which should keep Sinatra going—if not from here to eternity then, at least, for a long, long while to come.

Hat on, tie loosened and a cigarette dangling between his fingers Frank thrusts his hand in his trouser pocket and starts recording a song in the Hollywood studios of the Capitol Record Company. Few other singers work in such an easy, carefree way while making a disc, but then no other singer sings like Sinatra.

Jo Stafford

JO STAFFORD, who made her first appearance in England in 1952 when she headlined the London Palladium variety bill, has a unique position among America's vocalists. For red-haired Miss Stafford is the American State Department's only singing star and she is known throughout Europe and the rest of the world through her *Voice of America* radio programmes which are sponsored by the State Department.

When she arrived in London the American Embassy marked the occasion by throwing a cocktail party to welcome her. Thirty-three year old Jo is tall—5 feet 7 inches—with a model's figure and she began singing with Tommy Dorsey's band at the same time as Frank Sinatra. She won a big following for herself with American troops during the war and in her *Voice of America* broadcasts she gives news of youth activities in the United States. The series is so popular it has a world-wide audience of 200,000,000.

" These programmes started after my records began to sell well among teenagers," explains Miss Stafford. " The State Department approached me and I agreed to do a weekly radio show for them free. Sometimes I interview people like the cowboy stars Hopalong Cassidy and Roy Rogers. I think it's a job worth doing."

In private life, Jo is the wife of composer and band leader Paul Weston. It was Paul who recommended her to Tommy Dorsey after hearing her sing as a sixteen year old. The couple have now been married three years. They live in fashionable Bel Air, a suburb of Los Angeles, and have a two year old son, Timothy John.

One of her best-known recordings is " Shrimp Boats ", of which her husband was part composer. Other successful recordings include her version of " Allentown Jail ", " Some Enchanted Evening " and " Ay-Round the Corner ".

Jo's income is in the £100,000 a year bracket and her record sales top 25,000,000. All her gramophone recordings are made in Hollywood where her husband is the West Coast representative for America's Columbia Records.

Jo's home has always been in the Los Angeles area and she made her first appearance as a singer when she formed the Stafford Sisters Trio with her two sisters. Each girl was paid $5 for singing on station KHJ in Los Angeles—Jo was twelve years old.

After her three years with the Dorsey orchestra Jo was signed up by a well-known personality in American show business—Mike Nidorf, former President of General Artists' Corporation, one of America's top theatrical and variety agencies.

Mike Nidorf was the man who guided the show business destinies of such well-known bands as those of Woody Herman, Artie Shaw and the late Glenn Miller. Under Nidorf's management, grey-eyed Jo secured a contract with Capitol Records and it was under this label she made her first hit record—" Suddenly It's Spring ".

In addition to enjoying big record sales in England, Jo also has her own weekly disc jockey show from Radio Luxembourg. Her programme is not only sent to English listeners but it is also broadcast

(Left) " You're right, Mitch, I'm not much of a glamour girl at the moment," Jo Stafford jokes with recording executive Mitch Miller during a break between cutting a new record for him. " But after all," adds Jo, " without these glasses I couldn't see a darn thing."

to the Netherlands, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Scandinavia.

Unlike most singers, whenever Jo travels on personal appearances the most important items of her baggage are not evening gowns—they are three reserve pairs of spectacles. Miss Stafford explains, " I take them off when I'm on the stage and I cannot see a thing without them."

How is it then that Miss Stafford manages to find her way on and off the side of the stage for every performance ? " Going on, I just walk straight ahead until I touch the microphone," she says. " Coming off it's a bit more tricky—I turn left, keep walking and hope someone will catch me."

(Left) " Well, I know it's you, Bill . . . even without my glasses," laughs Jo as she greets Hollywood actor William Holden during a session at the studio. " How about singing a song with me ? " asks Miss Stafford. From the look on the actor's face, it's obvious there's nothing he would like better.

David Whitfield

THE story of David Whitfield, twenty-nine year old tenor, is one of the most romantic in British show business.

David, who used to hump cement on lorries at a factory in Hull, had his first broadcast as a singer over the commercial station of Radio Luxembourg. While he was still in the Navy, he went along to watch Hughie Green record one of his amateur talent radio programmes *Opportunity Knocks* at Portsmouth for the Luxembourg station. But David wouldn't have sung at all if two young Wrens hadn't played a joke on the young Able Seaman. Unknown to David, the girls sent in his name beforehand and Hughie Green invited him from the stage to take part in the programme.

" The next thing I knew I was tuning in to Radio Luxembourg to hear myself on the air," says David. " Of course, I thought I was a star in a night and all that sort of thing. But in show business it's very seldom things happen as smoothly as that."

Leaving the Navy, David returned to his home in Hull and his old job at the local cement works. Hughie Green, however, still kept in touch with him and engaged him from time to time to appear in variety and concerts. One weekend David came to London to entertain at a dinner for which Hughie Green was providing the cabaret. As a result he was offered a job as a singer in a floor show which was to be presented at the newly opened Washington Hotel, in Curzon Street, Mayfair. The fee was £10 a week—just £2 more than his pay as a labourer.

" Do you really mean to tell me these two boys can sing ? " gags Bob Hope with Palladium boss Val Parnell as he chats with David Whitfield, Dickie Valentine and agent Lew Grade after the Royal Variety Show last year.

" It's no good singing to me," remarks a young member of David's audience as she turns her head away. " I'm a Johnnie Ray fan." But David won't be put off and goes on singing just the same. For, after all, by the time he's finished he's probably won her over to becoming a David Whitfield fan as well.

Encouraged by his wife, Sheila, David threw up his job in Hull and accepted this offer from impresario Cecil Landeau. But, despite an appearance on television for producer Richard Afton, no one took much notice of the young unknown singer.

However, it so happened that a party of people visited the Washington Hotel one evening and heard him. Among them was an executive from Decca Records, who chatted with Whitfield afterwards.

When his engagement terminated at the Washington, David returned to Hull. No one offered him any more work as a singer and it seemed that there was nothing else for him to do except to return to his old job. Then came a surprise offer—a try-out recording for Decca. David sang an old-time favourite " Marta " and on the strength of this the gramophone company rewarded him with a contract. A deal was also worked out whereby young Whitfield received financial backing. He was given singing lessons. He was taught stage deportment. He was groomed for stardom.

Eventually he was ready for his next recording—the famous religious ballad " I Believe ". The public liked the bold, eager style of the unknown singer and in ten days the sales topped 10,000 discs.

He made his first appearance in variety at the Granada Cinema, East Ham, London, and a few weeks later was topping the bill at the Tivoli Theatre, Hull—his home town. But it was with his third record that Whitfield really scored. The ballad chosen, again a semi-religious number, was " Answer Me ", and it was destined to make record history as the biggest selling record in Britain—all without a single B.B.C. broadcast.

For the original version closed with the line : " In my sorrow, may I turn to You—please answer me, Oh Lord " and on religious grounds the B.B.C. at once banned it. Clifford Davis, *Daily Mirror* radio correspondent, broke the story of the Whitfield Ban in his radio column, and before another version could be recorded to meet the B.B.C.'s requirements, Radio Luxembourg gave the song several broadcasts. Within those ten days the Whitfield version of " Answer Me " jumped to the top of the British Hit Parade.

Today, Whitfield is a top-of-the-bill performer. He has flown to America several times to appear

(Left) "Open wide," says Sheila as she sprays the throat of husband David. "Then we can both dash off, change into fancy dress and you can sing that new song for me." Being a good husband, David does just as he's told and Sheila just manages to make herself glamorous in time to settle on that settee before her singing husband reappears. Romantic David bends one knee as an Eastern prince to serenade Sheila. The song? Why, an Indian Love Lyric. What else?

on television and the New York critics have hailed him as a second Mario Lanza.

He has a young son, Lance, and, despite his success, still lives quietly in his home town. His business affairs are looked after by Lew and Leslie Grade, who run Europe's biggest variety agency. His musical director and adviser is bearded Reg Warburton who has been associated with the Whitfield success story from the very start.

Last year David enjoyed a big success with his version of "Santa Natale", while in 1955 he received a Gold Record for his first disc to top a million sales—the phenomenally successful "Cara Mia", written for him by orchestra leader Mantovani, who also provided the musical background to Whitfield's recording.

He sang at the 1954 Royal Variety Show before Her Majesty the Queen, but despite all the care taken to teach him stage assurance, David Whitfield remains very much

" But Daddy, there's no room for him in my bed," protests little Lance Whitfield when his father suggests he might like to take home one of Cinderella's Shetland ponies. Although, from the way the pony is looking, he'd be a willing guest in the Whitfield home any day.

What does it feel like to have hundreds of admiring girls writing to your husband? Sheila Whitfield knows the answer to that one for it's she who handles her husband's enormous fan mail. It's a business to be taken seriously too—eh, Sheila?

the shy, unspoiled Hull labourer—both on and off the stage.

He still has his breezy sailor's roll. He still has a natural, friendly charm. There is a genuineness about him which is lacking in so many of his contemporaries. And it is just this warmth which he puts into a song—as much as anything else—which has put him on top of the bill and endeared him to Britain's disc fans.

Vera Lynn

AT thirty-six Vera Lynn ranks next to Gracie Fields as the wealthiest, most successful woman singer that British show business has ever known. For fourteen years she has remained a top-of-the-bill attraction and her recordings have been consistent best-sellers.

Vera first faced an audience in London's East Ham district where she used to take sixpenny dancing lessons on Saturday afternoons. She was then Vera Welch, daughter of an artisan. Mrs. Harris, who ran these classes, made her head of her *Cracker Cabaret* which used to entertain at local charity concerts. Sometimes, after a splits and a back somersault, Vera was allowed to sing "Land of Hope and Glory" in the finale.

When she was seven, Vera received her first payment for singing a song in public. The fee was 7s. 6d. and she handed it over to her mother. At fifteen she went into a juvenile troupe at £2 10s. a week and a year later joined Howard Baker as a girl singer. Mr. Baker ran several bands at one-night dances and Vera used to sing at three or four of these a night, jumping on buses and trams to get round in time.

Joe Loss gave Vera her first broadcast in 1935, but it was Charlie Kunz who gave her the first worthwhile engagement when he was heading the orchestra at the old Casani Club in Regent Street. By this time Vera had changed her name to Lynn. One big-time band leader took her on at £5 a week to sing for him but after ten days he sent her home. "Sorry, Vera," he said. "You just haven't got it. No talent." The man who turned Vera down chuckles when he thinks about it today—it was Billy Cotton.

Showman-bandleader Bert Ambrose was next to recognise Vera's ability. She sang for Ambrose for three years and it was during this period that she met her husband, Harry Lewis, a clarinet player with the Ambrose orchestra. Vera met him in the bandleader's office just as he was telling everyone how much he disliked sob singers. The couple went down in the lift together but when Harry invited her to lunch Vera refused and went off in a huff.

On tour Harry got to know sob singer Vera better and at Brighton, on the last week of the tour, they became engaged. Harry gave up his position with the band and has looked after his wife's business affairs ever since. He is, in fact, the brains behind all her recordings, stage appearances and radio programmes.

During the war Vera had a big success in a Max Miller revue at the old Holborn Empire—with just one song picked for her by Walter Ridley, the record company executive who has also piloted

Alma Cogan to fame. The song was " Yours "—a tailor-made ballad for Vera who has used it as her signature tune and theme music ever since.

Soon after the Max Miller revue, *Apple Sauce*, Harry went into the R.A.F. and the B.B.C. gave Vera a radio series. It was called *Sincerely Yours* and its outlook exactly matched Vera's style. In it Vera passed on messages between husbands and wives, boyfriends and sweethearts. Military hospitals postponed the " Lights out at 9.30 " rule so that the men could hear her. Her mail from the forces totalled a thousand letters a week. She went to Burma, flying 30,000 miles to sing in the jungle.

Today Vera has a five-bedroomed house, a £2,000 mink, but she is still very much the girl who used to sing for Mum and Dad in the front room. She has still never had a singing lesson and when she went to America three years ago she had as big a success there as she has enjoyed in her own country. The American magazine *Newsweek* said this about one of her television appearances : " Miss Lynn butters her corn with a special recipe. Each member of the audience thinks she is singing only for him. American television cameras caught this person-to-person delivery."

Her biggest post-war success has been " Auf Wiedersehn "—the disc that became No. 1 on the American Hit Parade with Vera the first British artist to achieve such a distinction. Americans bought 1,000,000 copies of this disc, Great Britain another 500,000. All told, over 2,000,000 discs of this song were sold and Vera earned £150,000 worth of dollars for Britain with just one recording.

Today, the girl from East Ham still washes and sets her own hair makes her nylon slips, keeps a Swiss maid but does the cooking. The best story told about her is that of the time when she was doing a show for the Royal Family and the Queen Mother came to the dressing

" And now—here is Vera Lynn," announces disc jockey Dickie Attenborough as he introduces her over the air in his Radio Luxembourg programme. Vera herself has a big following on commercial radio and is one of the many big stars who broadcast regularly in their own series from this Continental transmitter.

(Right) "Have some cake," says Jimmy Edwards. "Delicious," reports Vera Lynn. And Terry-Thomas? Well, what would you expect him to say? Why, "Good Show" . . . . of course.

room to thank her.

"Oh hallo," said Vera—and curtsied. She then remembered that her husband was in the room, feeling somewhat embarrassed.

At once Vera rose to the occasion.

"You don't know my husband, do you?" she said brightly. "Harry—this is the Queen. Your Majesty—this is Harry."

In America, every singer who sells a million discs of a recording is presented with a Gold Record to mark the achievement. As the first British artist to win this success Vera is entitled to this admiring look from Guy Mitchell. Vera's best selling disc was "Auf Wiedersehn."

Guy Mitchell

TWENTY-EIGHT year old Guy Mitchell had the honour of being the first American artist to be seen on Commercial television when he appeared in the opening *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* show, which Tommy Trinder introduced to viewers on the 25th September. This was singer Guy's fourth visit to Britain in three years—a record for any American singing star.

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Guy relies on a folksy, homely approach to a song. He specialises in good, rousing chorus numbers as " My Heart Cries for You ", " The Roving Kind " and " She Wears Red Feathers ". He has a friendly, matey way with a song and likes to get his audiences joining in. It's a style he has developed for himself and one which has hit the jackpot. In five years his discs have sold more than 15,000,000 copies.

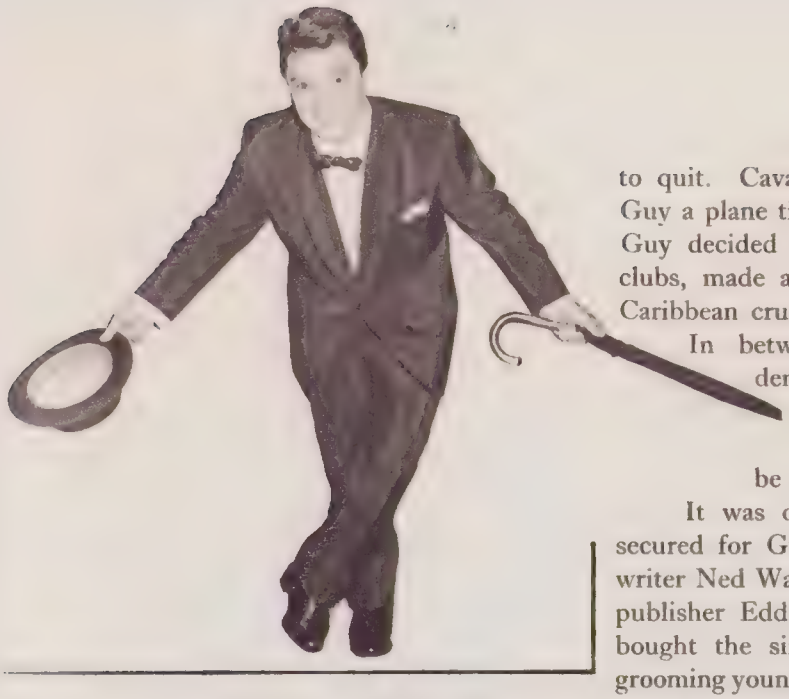
Singer Guy's professional career began when he was eleven years old. A stranger heard him singing on a bus to Los Angeles, handed his mother his card and promised to arrange an audition with a film company. Warner Bros. signed up the young singer for grooming as a child star and during his lessons in dancing, diction and acting he broadcast regularly over Warner Bros. Hollywood radio station. But his family moved from Los Angeles to San Francisco and Guy had to give up any hope of becoming a child film star. In San Francisco the seventeen year old Guy secured regular work as a singer, for the first time, with a cowboy radio show.

After war service with the U.S. Navy he joined the famous American band of Carmen Cavallaro. Everything was working out fine until the band took up its annual engagement at New York's famous Astor Roof. The band had only just opened at the famous night spot when Guy became ill and had

" All of me—why not take all of me? " could be the plea of singer Guy as he stands with outstretched arms before the George Mitchell singers. No relation to Guy of course, just good friends.

(Above) Umbrella furled, bowler at a jaunty angle, ex-cowboy Guy becomes a bank clerk as he steps out with his famous "Red Feathers" number—the story of a London bank clerk who falls in love with a hula-hula dancer. "Hope you liked it," says Guy at the close. Of course we did, give us the name of your bank and you can look after our money any time.

(Below and right) There once was a time when a young guy thought he'd like to be a saxophone player in a ship's orchestra. He started off all right with a sailor's outfit and the correct instrument. Fortunately for his fans, however, he later turned to singing instead . . . and collecting outsize cufflinks too by the look of that shirt.



to quit. Cavallaro had to engage another singer but he gave Guy a plane ticket home and enough money for a holiday. But Guy decided to stay in New York. He sang in small night clubs, made a trip as a vocalist with a ship's orchestra on a Caribbean cruise.

In between he managed to keep going by making demonstration records for song writers. The composers used to pay Guy a few shillings to record their tunes for them so that they could be played over to music publishers.

It was one of these demonstration jobs that eventually secured for Guy his big break. He recorded a tune for song writer Ned Washington who wanted it for playing over to music publisher Eddie Joy. Mr. Joy not only bought the song—he bought the singer too. And—as his manager—he set about grooming young Mitchell into a best seller on gramophone records.

In March 1950 Eddie Joy negotiated a contract with America's Columbia Records whose titles appear in England under the Philip's label. But when Guy arrived at the recording studio for the first session he was so scared he couldn't sing a note. " I went home completely fed up," he says. " I knew I'd messed up my big chance." Two days later, however, the company invited him to return. The orchestra had recorded the song without him and all he had to do was to add the words to their music. Three more records followed but none of them made any impression.

But the fifth disc went over big ! On one side there was " My Heart Cries for You ", and on the other " The Roving Kind ". It was " The Roving Kind " which put Mitchell on the map. It sold over 2,000,000 copies.

Guy sang at last year's Royal Variety Show, after which he had a long conversation with the Duke of Edinburgh, telling him about his experiences in the U.S. Navy and about when he worked as a cowboy outside San Francisco. Once he had a job as an apprentice saddle-maker and became an expert leather worker. He still makes all his own riding gear.

" Hey there," calls out Jerry Lewis to his partner Dean Martin. " Get a load of this fellow Guy Mitchell—he's great." Singer Guy also looks happy about his new song and dance routine. But don't worry he has no intention of replacing Dean Martin on a permanent basis.

GUY MITCHELL

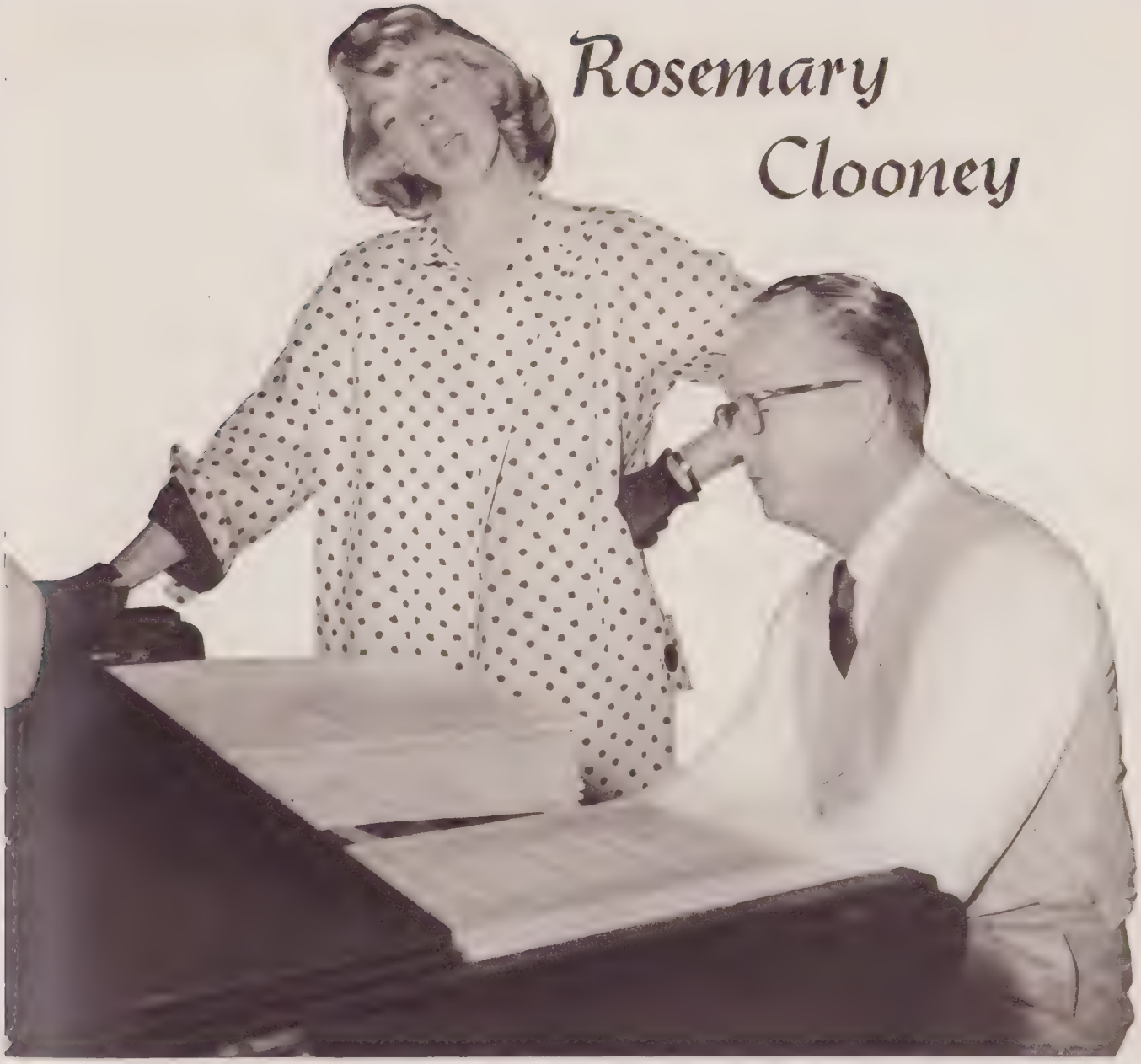
His marriage to American beauty queen, Jackie Loughery, was dissolved last year. The separation followed a dramatic, secret flight to this country when Jackie suddenly arrived at Glasgow Empire. She was waiting on the side of the stage when her husband walked off after finishing his act. " I'd asked Jackie to stay in America and make a home for my return," explains Guy. " She is a sweet, nice girl but the trouble is that she is all mixed up with Hollywood. Jackie wants a career. To me marriage *is* a career."

Mitchell has bought his parents a small ranch and is now saving up for a larger one for himself. " That's what I really want," he says. " Of course I'll marry again, but this time it will be a girl who is going to be interested in *my* career. All I want out of life is to hear folks say ' There goes a man with a fine piece of land and swell kids.' "

Newspapermen have a saying that it's news when a man bites a dog. So maybe that's why Abbott and Costello, Guy Mitchell and the dog too are determined to make headline news somehow.

Guy has made several visits to Scotland where he has built up a big following among Scottish audiences. During one tour he visited the home of Mr. John C. Sword at Ayr and was able to admire some of the vintage vehicles which Mr. Sword has collected. Out of the 140 old motor cars owned by Mr. Sword, singer Guy chooses this one for his photograph.

Rosemary Clooney



" Like to try out a new song ? " asks Rosemary Clooney's pianist. The singer doesn't hesitate a moment. The handbag is put on the piano, she doesn't even bother to take off her gloves. For, who knows ? Maybe the unknown song is destined for the hit parade and if Rosemary turns down this chance to hear it the ballad may get snapped up by one of her rival song girls.

BING CROSBY calls her " The best singer in the business ". She is 5 feet 6 inches with honey-blonde hair, blue eyes and a slim figure. Married to Broadway's highest paid actor, Jose Ferrer, she has become in just three short years the highest paid girl singer in the world. Her name ? Rosemary Clooney.

Daughter of a Kentucky house painter, Rosemary's success story began with her version of " Come On-a My House ". She followed this up with " Botch-a-Me " and then along came such films as *The Stars Are Singing*, *Here Come the Girls* and *Red Garters*.

Rosemary, who came to England and topped the bill at the London Palladium in the summer of 1955, is no newcomer to entertaining in public. She has no less than twenty-one years' experience behind her. When she was three years old, Rosemary and her younger sister Betty used to sing for

election crowds in Maysville, Kentucky, where her grandfather was trying to get himself elected as the mayor. Even at that age the two Clooney sisters must have had a way with a song. They not only helped to get her grandparent into mayoral robes at three elections—they also won every amateur contest in the district.

When the singing sisters were thirteen, the family moved to Cincinnati. There, the girls turned professional and their sister singing act was soon earning £14 a week from Cincinnati's WLW radio station. They worked hard for their money. They had to be available all day and were expected to sing anything from hill-billy tunes to sentimental midnight ballads in a programme called *Moon River*.

When Tony Pastor came through Cincinnati looking for new singers the Clooney sisters were swimming in a local pool. They rushed out, sang an audition with wet hair lying limply round their

" Any moment now," warns Cyril Stapleton during his B.B.C. Show Band broadcast. The orchestra leader looks over to the glass panelled control booth, waits for the producer's go ahead signal and then smoothly announces his two distinguished guests—Rosemary and husband Jose Ferrer. " Wonderful," Mr. Ferrer seems to be saying to himself. " He's even pronounced my name right too."

Someone has told Rosemary and Jose to look down at something or other. What could it be? We put the question to Miss Clooney during a singing session and although she thought hard she couldn't for the life of her recall just what it was all about. Oh well, it doesn't matter. Rosemary's getting used to finding odd things to look at. Even with a basket of flowers there's no knowing who is going to pop up and surprise her. What a funny fellow this Danny Kaye is—isn't he Rosemary?

faces—but they got the job. Band leader Pastor paid them £40 a week each and they toured the country in one-night stands.

In 1946 Rosemary recorded her first solo song—" I'm Sorry I Didn't Say I'm Sorry When I Made You Cry Last Night ". Hardly anyone bought the recording but Rosemary's " barrelhouse " style—which is the recording industry's description of her robust, fresh yet seductive approach to a ballad—immediately impressed the Pastor band manager, Joe Shribman. Shribman took over her business affairs as a solo singer and three years later persuaded Columbia records to give her a contract. Her first ten recordings were all flops and then along came " Come On-a My House ".

(Left) No—this isn't a name tag in case Rosemary gets lost, it's just the name plate which goes on the door of the number one dressing room for every top of the bill star appearing at the London Palladium.

(Below) Summer in an English garden . . . the sun shines, the birds sing and Miss Clooney, in a cool summer frock, smiles her happiness. Rosemary and flowers go well together, don't they ?

At first, blue-eyed Rosemary hadn't much faith in this Armenian-American calypso when it was suggested she should record it. At the recording session she just couldn't make it sound as it should. Then Columbia's famous Mitch Miller came down from the control room and put Rosemary on the right track. " Think of it this way, Rosie," he explained. " You're asking that boy over to your house because you're going to marry him." Rosemary tried again. Mitch Miller—back in the glass-walled control room—smiled his approval. The record became a world hit, selling more than 2,000,000 copies.

The secret of Miss Clooney's popularity is very much the same as Vera Lynn's—she sings like the girl next door. And, like Vera Lynn, she has a big market with her songs for children. She says this of herself, " I am a girl anyone can look like—plainish. My voice ? I never studied to sing. I just make a commercial sound that sells songs. I don't warm up my voice or anything like that. What do I have to warm up to ? "

Husband Jose Ferrer, however, offers a more accurate assessment of Rosemary Clooney's ability. " She under-estimates herself," he says. " She can discuss music with me—even long-hair music. And I like the way she looks."

Dennis Lotis

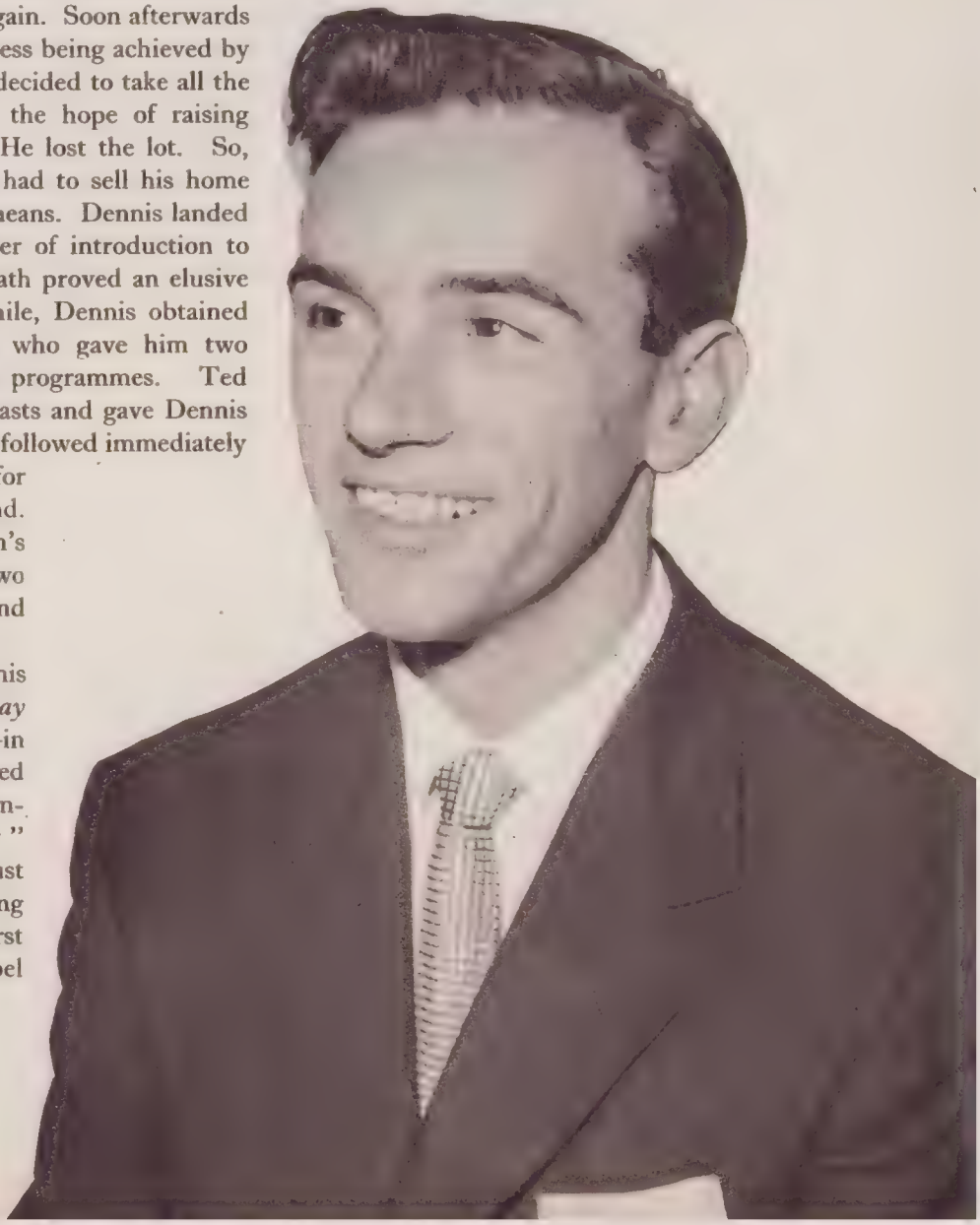
ONE of Britain's newest headliners in variety during 1955 has been twenty-nine year old Dennis Lotis, a slim, dark good-looking South African who, like Dickie Valentine, progressed to Music Hall stardom via Ted Heath's band. Dennis opened in variety at Manchester Hippodrome on Easter Monday. By a coincidence, at exactly the same time Dickie Valentine was facing his first London Palladium audience; also as a top line star.

Dennis first came to Britain four years ago after singing with some of South Africa's leading bands. He also had his own commercial radio show called *Anything Goes*. His first public appearance was made when he was nine years old—as a talent contest winner when he sang "Who Made Little Boy Blue?" on a children's radio programme.

When he was fifteen, Dennis ran away from school to become a £4 a week bus conductor. But after three weeks his father insisted on a more stable career and arranged for him to be apprenticed to an electrical engineer. His pay went down to 15s. a week. Young Dennis, however, was determined to sing for a living. He gave up studying to be an electrician and became a £10 a week singer with a cinema organist.

Dennis first saw his wife, Rena, while working with a band at a fashion show—she was one of the models. A week later they met again. Soon afterwards they eloped. Hearing of the success being achieved by other singers in Britain, Dennis decided to take all the money he had to the races in the hope of raising enough funds for the journey. He lost the lot. So, before leaving South Africa, he had to sell his home to leave his wife with sufficient means. Dennis landed in England with £25 and a letter of introduction to Ted Heath. But bandleader Heath proved an elusive person to track down. Meanwhile, Dennis obtained an introduction to Henry Hall who gave him two broadcasts in his *Guest Night* programmes. Ted Heath heard one of these broadcasts and gave Dennis an audition. A job with the band followed immediately and Dennis was able to send for his wife to join him in England. The couple live in St. John's Wood, London, with their two children—five year old Damon and three year old Kim.

During the summer, Dennis made his first film—*The Extra Day* in colour and CinemaScope—in which he has an important featured role and sings two specially composed songs—"The Extra Day" and "Time and Place". In August 1955 Dennis signed a new recording contract with Pye-Nixa and his first record to be issued under that label



was "They Say You're Laughing at Me" and "Domani". In October 1955 he began his first television series *Hit Parade* for the B.B.C.

Dennis Lotis is the only singer to enjoy the distinction of being granted special permission by the Birmingham magistrates to kiss the girls in the audience at Birmingham Hippodrome. This was necessary because, on his opening night, as part of his act, he left the stage to go down and kiss three girls in the stalls. The theatre manager pointed out to him that under the rules of the Watch Committee he should not have left the stage without special permission. So singer Dennis had to go to Court to get official sanction for his kissing excursions into the auditorium.

But the magistrates ruled that the Lotis kisses could not be given to everyone—only members of the Lotis fan club.

(Above) The setting is a South African park. A young man looks into the future. Can he see himself as one of Britain's top singing stars? We doubt it. For the year is 1948 and Dennis Lotis is only 22.

(Above) Dennis joins Lita Roza in a late-night broadcast with Ted Heath and his orchestra. And if you want to know what that hand is doing round Lita's waist it's just that it helps Dennis to sing better.

(Right) Cowboys and Indians can be a wonderful game when Mum and Dad join in too. Besides, if any real redskins should turn up in the garden of their St. John's Wood, London N.W. home three year old Kim, and Damon, aged 5, are quite sure their daddy will know just how to handle them.

Eddie Fisher

WHEN dark-haired Eddie Fisher opened at the London Palladium in March 1955, his fiancee Debbie Reynolds stood among the stage hands at every performance. The moment came for Eddie to announce that he had " a big surprise for you all "—and the fans knew just what to expect. It was Debbie.

From then onwards, right up to their wedding in September, the " Eddie and Debbie " romance of the year was very much an on and off affair. Indeed, the wedding was postponed four times before twenty-six year old Mr. Fisher married twenty-two year old Miss Reynolds, M.G.M.'s bright, vivacious singing star, in the Catskill Hills outside New York.

Eddie's first visit to Britain came two years ago—as a G.I. in the American Army. His pay—£8 10s. a week. His two years' service was spent in a series of twice-daily performances all over Europe and the Far East entertaining his fellow comrades-in-arms. In between, the American Army allowed him a few days off now and then to make gramophone records. That's how it was that as soon as he was out of the Army he found a £2,000-a-week-plus contract waiting for him for the London Palladium—and a cream-walled suite at the Savoy Hotel.

Recordings like " I'm Yours ", " Downhearted " and " I'm Walking Behind You "—the last-named by British song writer Billy Reid—ensured him a warm, ready-made audience for his London opening.

Short, dark and shy Eddie says, " I just sing. No tricks, no crying—I sing just the way I've always been singing." Eddie has been singing since he was seven years old. In those days he used

" I'm Yours," sings Eddie Fisher as he arrives in New York Harbour. It's an announcement he could also make in most countries for Eddie's records are big sellers all over the world.

(Centre) "Quiet for a moment, fella," says Eddie Fisher, the singing G.I., as he gets ready to swing into another song during some late-night entertainment in the open air for American troops serving on the Korean battlefront.

(Right) The TV show is over, but the fans stay behind in the N.B.C. studio. Eddie hasn't any particular place to go for the moment so he obliges with a few more songs. All the same, this doesn't stop one of the girls taking a closer look to make sure he's singing the right notes.

(Left) The camera moves in closer, Eddie goes on singing. . . . This is only a rehearsal but when the real thing hits the air it means a big full face picture of handsome, young Mr. Fisher in millions of American homes. By the way, notice that oblong box-like contraption projecting from the camera above the TV lens? That's a TelePrompter which slowly revolves the words which Eddie has to say and sing. This American device, specially devised to assist TV performers in remembering their lines, is also used extensively in this country on both B.B.C. and commercial television.

to hawk vegetables from his father's truck in the streets of Philadelphia, his home town.

At seven he won a child talent contest; the only boy against twelve girls. By the age of thirteen he had become a veteran performer, singing under such names as Dick White, Sonny Edwards, Skippy White, or any other names he could think of. He worked on several radio programmes and even won a children's hour contest promoted by a firm of bakers. His prize—a cake.

At eighteen Eddie had sung with a number of bands and he then became resident vocalist at New York's famous late-night restaurant, the Copacabana. The management gave him the engagement after he had appeared on the same programme as such experienced singers as Frank Sinatra, Vic Damone, Eddie Duchin, and Joan Edwards, and had still received an ovation. Eddie then spent two years entertaining on a circuit of expensive hotels and restaurants in the Catskill Hills near New York where Danny Kaye and Milton Berle—as unknowns—had been before him.

In 1949 he was at a charity show and was asked by Eddie Cantor, "What dates have you had, son?" "Played the Paramount, New York," replied Eddie. "Never saw your name on the bill," answered the American comedian. "Oh," said Eddie, "I wasn't billed. I sang with the organ between the shows—they paid me $75 a week." Eddie Cantor was so impressed with the young twenty year old boy that he made him a member of his touring road show and secured a recording contract for him with RCA Victor.

Comedian Cantor is the man who selected Dinah Shore, Deanna Durbin and Bobby Breen as unknowns and helped them to become top-liners. He certainly hit the jackpot again in spotting young Mr. Fisher.

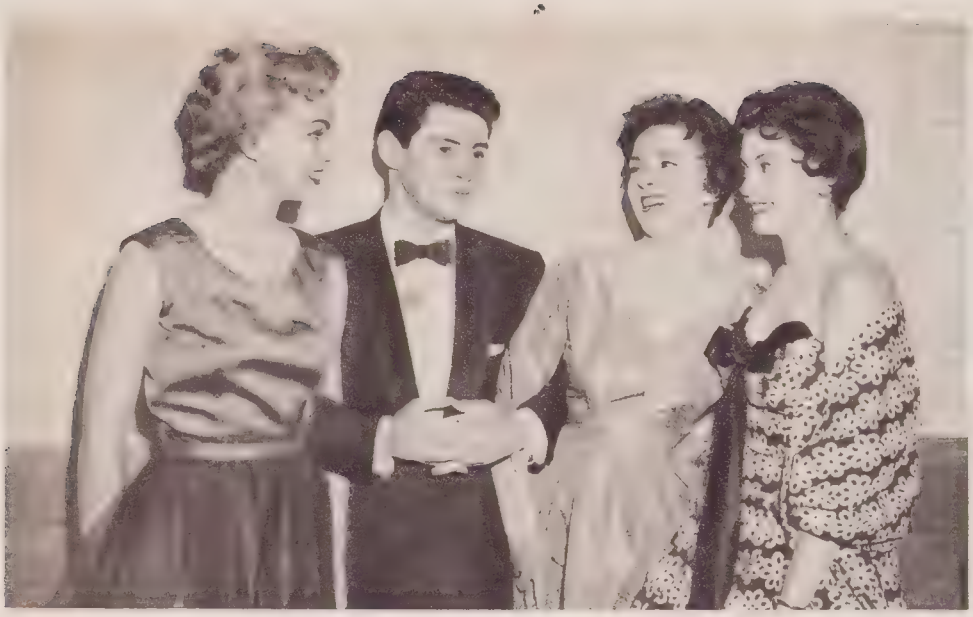
A year later the American magazine *Billboard* named him "The Best New Singer of the Year 1950". His record sales grew.

His big break came in June of that year when American singer Fran Warren, due to open the plush Riviera night-club, fell ill. With less than twenty-four hours' notice and only an hour's rehearsal, Eddie went into the spotlight on the night club floor. His performance rocked the audience and the next day he was flooded out with offers. Young Mr. Fisher was able to accept most of them, as until his appearance at the Riviera he had only had one week's work booked ahead of him. Three film companies, Paramount, Warners and RKO, offered him screen tests; the NBC radio network suggested a series; six national magazines presented profiles . . . in the terms of American show business "Fisher was in".

Some of his best selling records have since been "Any Time", "Wish You Were Here" and "Lady of Spain". His favourite food is lima beans and whenever he is not on the stage he likes to lounge around in slacks and sports coats.

One of his greatest admirers in England is Princess Margaret who buys all his recordings and who invited Eddie to sit at her table during a charity ball at the Dorchester Hotel when he visited England in 1953.

And now the wedding bells have finally rung for handsome Mr. Fisher. The wedding was held in the same district where Eddie Cantor spotted the unknown young singer just six years previously. From now on Eddie need no longer sing "Wish You Were Here" with a wistful, double meaning. For Debbie's answer to that is—"I'm Yours."



(Left) "Put me among the girls." says Eddie—and who can blame him when the girls turn out to be three such lovely Canadians as these? Eddie met them at a beauty contest and from the looks they're giving him it would appear they regard Mr. Fisher as pretty good looking too.

(Below) "Sign please," cry the fans, and if there are some who haven't bought his records this doesn't seem to worry the obliging Eddie. That's Debbie Reynolds beside him. Where are they? In the Oxford Street store of the H.M.V. company.

(Right) Eddie leaves New York airport; as he is flying to England he makes a nice gesture in flying British too. "Nice to have you aboard," the air hostess tells him. Nicer still if you had her job —eh girls?

Doris Day

DORIS DAY once again found her way on to Britain's best selling record list towards the end of 1955 with a fine version of " Love Me Or Leave Me ", the theme song of her picture with James Cagney of the life story of another famous American singer of the thirties- Ruth Etting.

Born Doris Kappelhoff on April 3rd, 1924, in Cincinnati, Ohio, Doris intended to be a classical musician like her father. But at the Hessler Dancing School, little Miss Kappelhoff decided that a dancing career would be much more fun.

The dancing lessons continued and her mother took in sewing to pay for them. When she was twelve Doris toured in variety. While touring, Doris was involved in a serious accident when a car in which she was a passenger hit a train at a level crossing. The next fourteen months were spent in and out of hospitals before her broken leg healed and she was able to walk again. During this period, expecting never to dance again, Doris began to study singing. Indeed, she became such a fine vocalist that her elder brother, Paul, and the rest of the family persuaded her she would be better off as a singer than a dancer.

At seventeen she began singing without payment on the local radio station, WCPO. Band leader Barney Rapp heard her on the air and signed her on as his vocalist. Said Barney, " You'll have to change your name. Kappelhoff is no good for a popular singer." Doris had been broadcasting a ballad called " Day After Day " when Barney first heard her. " Why not take the name Day for good luck ? " suggested the band leader. Miss Kappelhoff made the change and the luck has stayed with

her ever since.

For a time she sang with the Bob Crosby and Fred Waring orchestras before joining Les Brown with whom she stayed as resident vocalist for three years. It was then that she enjoyed a big success with a recording of " Sentimental Journey ". After appearing at the Little Club, New York, Doris went to Hollywood.

By this time she had had two unsuccessful marriages and was so depressed at her general domestic unhappiness that when she was interviewed by director Michael Curtiz she burst into tears. The director was puzzled but patient. There was something about the unknown singer, even in tears, which impressed him. A screen test was arranged and three days later Warner Brothers gave her a contract. Her first Hollywood film *It's Magic* enjoyed a big success and registered Doris Day as one of the brightest song and dance girls in the motion picture industry. Other musicals followed—*Calamity Jane*, *Tea for Two*, *Young At Heart* and *Fine and Dandy* among them.

But it was with *Storm Warning* —her first non-musical production —that Miss Day established herself as an actress capable of deep emotional characterisation. In this, the former dance band vocalist took the dramatic part of a housewife whose happiness is shattered by the murdering Klu Klux Klan. She has since followed this up with her impressive performance in *Love Me Or Leave Me.*

Miss Day's best known records include : " Black Hills of Dakota", " The Deadwood Stage ", " Blue Bells of Broadway ", " Foolishly Yours", "Two Hearts, Two Kisses" and, of course, " Secret Love ".

Doris is now married for the third time—to her agent Marty Melcher—and they live quietly in a small house which is shared by the star's mother, who looks after the fan mail and does most of the cooking.

Doris's favourite colour is red and the flowers she likes best are camellias. Her dislikes include having her hair done, answering the telephone, and make-up.

" Love Me Or Leave Me," sings Doris Day in a scene from the film which told the real life story of American torch singer Ruth Etting. Richard Conte at the piano makes his answer plain. There'll be no leaving the lovely Doris !

Lita Roza

DARK-HAIRED Lita Roza's first job was working in an overall factory for 14s. 6d. a week. Eldest of seven children, to her fell the job of pram pushing as well as odd jobs whenever she could get them to help out the family earnings. Her father, Spanish born, played a piano in working men's clubs and sometimes worked as a dock labourer. At twelve, Lita was a child dancer in a Norwich pantomime and when she was fifteen she was in the stage show *Black Velvet* with Ted Ray.

A German bomb on her home town of Liverpool took Lita out of the front row of the chorus. " I had fifteen stitches in my leg," she says. " I became a singer because you don't have to show your legs in an evening gown." Before Lita could get a break as a singer, however, she went to work in a pram shop, a florists and as a delivery girl for a gown shop.

" That was a bit better," she recalls. " Sometimes, when I wasn't collecting buttons or delivering dresses, they used to let me into the gown salon and I saw all the wonderful clothes. I made up my mind I would have clothes of my own like that one day."

From the gown shop Lita joined the Home and Colonial Stores in Lodge Lane, Liverpool, where she cut up and weighed packets of butter—at 17s. 6d. a week. She was so quick at the job the firm sent her round to other shops to show the other girls how it should be done. Lita stayed behind the grocery counter until 1942 when she saw an advertisement for a singer in a club called " The New Yorker " at Southport, Lancashire. She went for an audition, sang " Moonlight Becomes You " and secured the job at £5 a week. After three months, when she had saved just £8, she left and went to London.

" I knew nobody in London except the people at Kingston with whom I had been in digs when I was in *Black Velvet*," says Lita. " So I went to stay with them and then, lying about my age, went around all the agencies looking for work." Harry Roy gave the sixteen year old girl from Liverpool a job singing with his band and she stayed with him for a year. But when Harry went on a Middle East tour Lita was still only seventeen and her mother would not agree to her leaving the country.

Engagements followed with several small club bands and also a variety tour with Edmundo Ros. Then, in 1944, Lita married an American, quit show business and left to live in Miami.

When her marriage failed, Lita decided to return to show business. She started singing in American night clubs and sent band leader Ted Heath some recordings and a photograph. " The photograph was better than the singing," admits Heath. " But even then I realised Lita had got something." In 1950 Lita returned to England and Ted Heath put her on before a packed London Palladium audience at one of his Sunday swing concerts.

" Like to give me trumpet lessons ? " Lita Roza asks one of Ted Heath's musicians. From the smile on his face, it's obvious there is nothing this particular trumpeter would like better.

Three months later Lita joined Ted Heath on a permanent basis and by the end of the year had been placed No. 8 in the poll of Britain's popular singers. Brown-haired Lita stayed with the Heath orchestra for five years. Then, last year, she took the plunge and became the first post-war girl singer to tour Britain's music halls as a top-of-the-bill attraction, challenging a show business world where all the top line singing stars were exclusively male.

London agent Joe Collins—father of film star Joan—gave her a contract which guaranteed forty weeks' work at £250 a week with ten Sunday concerts at £100 each. The record which secured all this for Lita was her version of " How Much Is That Doggy In The Window ? " " I thought the Doggy song rather silly at the time," she says. " I didn't really want to sing it—we only had one run through and then recorded the number. No one could have been more surprised at its success than me." Her other best selling ballads have been " Allantown Jail ", " Blacksmith Blues " and " The Legend of the World ".

The girl from Liverpool celebrated her hit by spending the royalties on a Cambridge blue car with leopard skin upholstery. Today she shares a flat in Twickenham, Middlesex, with her young sister who also acts as her secretary.

She designs her own stage clothes which always feature her small waist and smooth, olive-skinned shoulders. " There is only one thing I miss now that I've left Ted Heath," she says. " With Ted I used to wear four different evening gowns a night—I could pop off and change between numbers. But in variety I have to stay on the stage all the time." Yet somehow Liverpool's Lita manages to make her dress look different mid-way through her forty-five minutes variety act. How's it done ?

" I've had some special over-skirts made in nylon net," she explains. " I can take them off in the wings in a moment and the close-fitting skirt underneath makes the whole thing look as though I've changed my gown ". Good idea, isn't it ?

" How do you like the cover on my new long playing record ? " orchestra leader Frank Chacksfield asks Lita. " Fine," she tells him. " I hope it sells as well as your famous recording of ' Ebb Tide.' "

Tennessee Ernie Ford

TENNESSEE ERNIE FORD—his real name is Ernest Ford—enjoyed a big success in Britain this year with his top of the Hit Parade recording of " Give Me Your Word ". Before this, British disc fans knew him as a hill-billy singer, associated with such Western ballads as " Mule Train ", " Kentucky Waltz ", and " Shotgun Boogie " which he wrote himself. The last-named—a great favourite with Her Majesty the Queen—sold 800,000 records in Britain. Along with his version of " Mule Train ", it was responsible for Ernie topping the bill at the London Palladium in 1953.

America's king of hill-billy singers is thirty-six years old, dresses like an Arizonian—in bright shirts and string ties—lives on a ranch in Whittier, California, and is a real outdoor man. He was born in Tennessee and after working in a dry cleaning shop and as a grocery clerk, he secured a job as a local radio announcer for $10 a week. Between his radio announcing he took singing lessons and when World War II came along he enlisted in the Air Corps in January 1942, where he flew in heavy bombers as a navigator and served for two years as an instructor.

Leaving the forces in 1945 he decided to try his luck in California. With his wife Betty—whom he'd met and married while stationed in California—he bought a 1941 car with his savings and headed West. After two jobs as a radio announcer he became a hill-billy disc jockey for station KXLA, Pasadena, and it was here that he met Cliffie Stone, one of the veterans of cowboy songs.

" Just for the heck of it," recalls Ernie, " I used to run into the studio while Cliffie's show was on the air, exchange a few jokes, join in the quartet and leave. It was all for fun and didn't pay a thing."

" Garn, you don't look like a real hill-billy singer to me," says the young cockney as he gives Tennessee Ernie Ford a close examination. But there's certainly no doubt in the minds of those girls. One of them, anxious not to miss a chance of getting close to Ernie, didn't even bother to take her pins out. . . .

"Oh you great big wonderful man you," says radio actress Molly Bee (right) to Ernie during one of his radio programmes, as Doris Drew looks on. From the way she's saying it, Molly might well mean it too. Sorry, Miss Bee, but Ernie is happily married with two small boys—Brian and Jeffrey. But if you'd like to join them in their swimming pool at home sometime—the family would make you very welcome.

But Westerner Stone soon insisted on Ford joining his Saturday night show as a regular. This was the start of " Tennessee Ernie ".

In the past six years he has become a big name in American entertainment, and in addition to his solo recordings he has also been teamed on records with such singers as Kay Starr and Betty Hutton. In 1954 he sang the title song for the film *River of No Return*, starring Marilyn Monroe and Robert Mitchum. This was Tennessee's first entrance into the more popular form of singing. Since then he has added his last name, Ford, to his billing and he is now concentrating on popular commercial songs as well as the hill-billy numbers that made him famous.

In America, Ernie has his own five days a week half-hour television show and a half-hour five days a week radio programme. One of his regular cast on the air is Gary Crosby—son of the great Bing. Between his own radio and television shows, Ernie is kept busy with guest appearances on all the top television programmes.

Ernie, who is six feet tall, slim and tanned, has two sons—five year old Jeffrey and two year old Brian.

Though Ernie no longer specialises in only hill-billy tunes, he agrees it was " Mule Train " which sent him to the top. Ernie's own explanation for his success here is simple enough. " There were twenty-one singers who recorded that tune," he says. " But I was the only one who had ever driven mules."

Billy Daniels

BILLY DANIELS spent twenty years in show business before his recording of "That Old Black Magic" caught on with the disc fans of England and America. On the strength of this one recording, which sold over 3,000,000 copies, Billy came to England in 1952 to top the bill at the London Palladium and, ever since, the impressionists have been getting laughs and applause with their imitations of Mr. Daniels' shimmies, wriggles and hand flutterings before the microphone. His unique treatment of a song has won him the distinction of being America's most impersonated singer in this country, next to Johnnie Ray.

Billy Daniels, son of a postal official from Jacksonville, Florida, first sang in a choral group travelling round the States. He then went North to New York and had a number of jobs as a night club singer. He belongs to the older school of U.S. singers. He began as an £8 a week singing waiter and, like Crosby, Sinatra and Frankie Laine, the passing of the years has made it necessary for Billy to wear a snug toupee.

Now in his early forties, he is married to a Boston society heiress, Martha Braun, some thirteen years his junior, who accompanied him on his first variety tour in this country. A snappy dresser, he brought with him fourteen brand new evening dress suits for the occasion—at a cost of £80 each.

On stage Billy is a great showman. He likes to use his arms as he sings and his gestures alternate between movements of wide, sweeping grace and quick bird-like flutters. He snaps his fingers like castanets and shuffles his highly polished shoes around with a Charleston-like movement. He doesn't possess a great voice—but he does possess an amazing gift for presenting old numbers in a new exciting way.

When Jack Jackson broadcast his recording of "Black Magic" in his late-night disc jockey show over the B.B.C. network, it brought in more mail than any other disc Jackson had ever previously played over the air.

"All this talk of being an overnight success is all very well," says Billy. "But in my experience this sort of thing just doesn't happen without many years of preparation." It was those many years of preparation which enabled Billy to take hold of such established ballads as "Smile", "Bye-bye Blackbird" and "I

ROSEMARY CLOONEY

" You're the fellows they want to photograph—not me," jokes Palladium boss Val Parnell while chatting to Billy Daniels and Guy Mitchell. But we'd still like you in the picture Mr. Parnell, even if you can't compete with that outsize ring on Billy's little finger or that enormous cuff link on Guy's shirt. It's a miniature gramophone record. Did you spot that ?

(Below) " Round and round I go," sings Billy. . . . " Down and down I go," replies that bass player, from his upside down position. As you can see, it's not that old black magic which has Billy in its spell here—it's the crazy antics of the Hoofers' dance quintet playing for Billy during one of his cabaret seasons at Las Vegas.

Get a Kick Out of You" and give them a new-style treatment which at once made them best sellers.

During his three visits to Britain he has appeared in the B.B.C.'s *Cafe Continental* on television and has also broadcast with Cyril Stapleton and the B.B.C. Show Band. His films include *On The Sunny Side of the Street* in which he co-starred with Frankie Laine and *When You're Smiling*.

It's Billy Daniels himself who tells the best story about his unique " grunt " and " groan " treatment of popular numbers which began with " That Old Black Magic " and has stood him in good stead ever since. " The first time I ever sang the number I had a severe pain in my stomach," says Billy. " I just threw my arms around because it hurt."

All of which goes to show that even a tummy-ache can be useful—in show business.

Jack Benny likes to joke about being the meanest man in the world. But there was nothing mean in the lavish praise the comedian showered on singer Billy after his opening performance at the London Palladium. " Some show," said Benny. Then, after a closer look at the singer, he added : " Some shirt too."

Max Bygraves

ONE of the big disc sellers of 1955 has been a young man who, surprisingly enough, never thought much of himself as a popular singer. In fact, he really started out in show business as a comedian. Just seven years ago, Max Bygraves—thirty-one year old, former apprentice carpenter—was earning £5 10s. a week. Today he is one of the biggest money earners in British show business.

Max got his first chance as an entertainer while he was serving in the R.A.F. He enjoyed appearing on the stage but it never really occurred to him he was good enough to make a living at it.

Son of an East End docker, he returned to carpentry on demobilisation but, whenever he could, he still enjoyed entertaining at local working men's clubs and parties. But his wife, Blossom—they married when she was in the W.A.A.F.—always believed in his ability as an entertainer. And it was she who persuaded him to accept Jack Payne's offer of a job as a comedian in a touring revue. The star of the show was singer Donald Peers, but the bill included another unknown comedian whose name was in just as small type as Max's—that of Frankie Howerd.

The ex-carpenter had his big chance when someone was wanted to replace Ted Ray at the London

DICKIE VALENTINE

TENNESSEE ERNIE FORD

(Right) "What am I bid? What am I bid?" gags Max as he holds his picture in one hand and a pen in the other. But Max Bygraves is only fooling—he doesn't really charge for his autograph and he is only too pleased to sign photographs for his admirers at the Earls Court radio show.

(Below) "They tell me you two kids are getting married," says Max to Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds. "We sure are," replies Debbie. "Of course," adds Eddie. As you all know—they have too.

Palladium. Ted had gone to Manchester to appear in a big charity show and the unknown comedian from Bermondsey took his place. At once his pleasant, easy style won over the vast Palladium audience. And that night—before the orchestra had played him off—Max Bygraves had become a headline music-hall star.

Radio then, too, had a hand in helping him along—he went into the *Educating Archie* series with Peter Brough. Soon, his catch phrases " A good idea—*son* " and " I've arrived—and to prove it I'm here " were making him welcome in the homes of millions.

Judy Garland was so impressed

" That's about right," says Max. " We don't want to scratch it do we ? " From the care he's taking it must be one of his own records which the comedian is playing in the lounge of his home at Canons Park, Edgware, Middlesex.

with his effective, easy-going manner with an audience that she invited him to appear with her in variety in New York at the famous Palace Theatre—a great tribute for a British entertainer. He has also appeared in two Palladium pantomimes and has had several successful tours of the U.S.A. In August, 1955 he flew over to appear on two successive Sundays in Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* television show.

Off stage, Max is seldom recognised in the street. He is quiet, good-looking and wears spectacles and his records have big sales among children, notably "Gilly, Gilly, Ossenfeffer", "You're a Pink Toothbrush" and "The Dummy Song" with Archie Andrews. Other records which have been big hits are : "The Jones

Why the agony Max ? If you don't like the noise you're making on those drums, why not stop ? " It's not me," explains comedian Bygraves. " It's that pianist. He's playing the wrong tune."

JOHNNIE RAY

DORIS DAY

Boy" and " Heart of My Heart ".

Max has three children—two girls and a boy. His sister works for him as a secretary and he has bought his parents a house at Welling, Kent.

His real name is Walter—"Max" is a left-over from his days in the R.A.F. At canteen concerts he used to tell jokes in a breezy, brash way that at once reminded his audiences of Max Miller. They called him Max—and Max it's been ever since.

(Above) " Just a moment," protests the violinist. " Let me get in somewhere." But Max has other things on his mind. For instance, which of those stops ought he to press to get some sound from that trumpet ?

(Left) " And they both lived happily ever after," says daddy as he reads the family a bedtime story. Christine, the eldest, has her doubts. Anthony and Butch, the dog, have obviously heard the whole tale before somewhere. Only little Maxine, on mother's knee, seems impressed.

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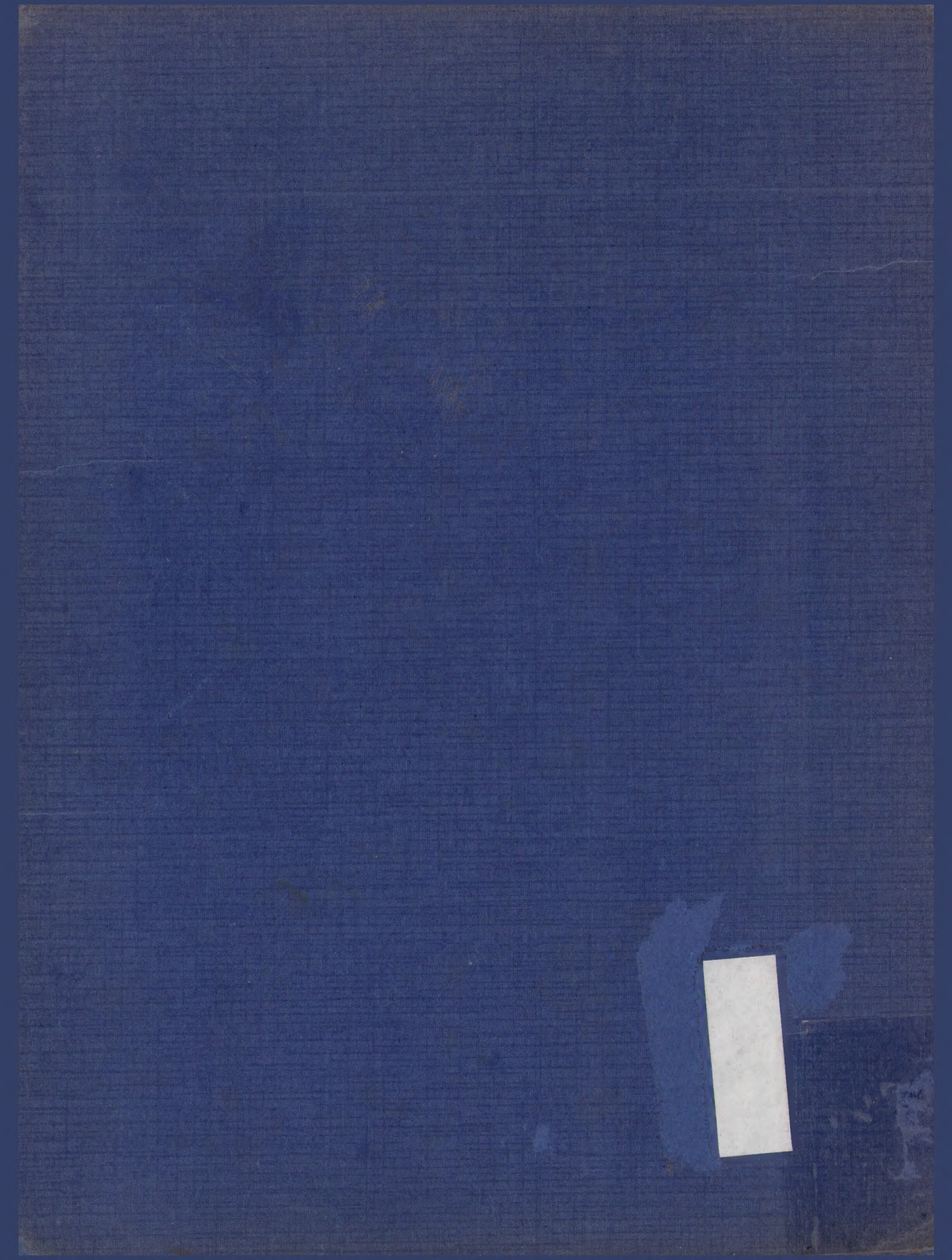
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